













# THE YOUNG RUSSIA

RAMKRISHNA BAJAJ

*Foreword by*  
S. RADHAKRISHNAN

*Introduction by*  
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## FOREWORD



VICE-PRESIDENT  
INDIA  
NEW DELHI  
May 16, 1960

Shri Ramkrishna Bajaj was recently on a visit to the Soviet Union as a representative of the Youth Congress. He has put down his impressions in this book. His account is generally sympathetic but occasionally critical. The book is written with ability and a keen sensibility.

The Soviet Union is making tremendous progress on the technological side. If these great technological developments are used for raising the living standards of the people they will have enough leisure and opportunity for the exercise of spiritual pursuits. I have no doubt that this will happen soon.



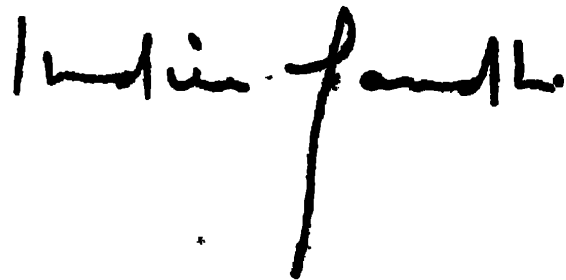


## INTRODUCTION

The Soviet Union has aroused the curiosity and interest of the World ever since it came into being. For many years it was shrouded in mystery and only a selected few could travel and observe this new experiment in political and social life. With increased travel facilities more and more people are going there, for whether one admires it or disparages it, the Soviet Union compels our attention. Because of its size and power, because of its tremendous advance in the fields of science and technology, it is destined to play a crucial part in the shaping of the future.

Much has been written about the Soviet Union and many divergent opinions expressed. This book brings the point of view of a young Indian business man whose family was in the thick of our freedom struggle, living close to Gandhiji and receiving his constant guidance. Shri Ramkrishna Bajaj himself has been active in the Youth movement.

I hope his book will be widely read and will contribute to a better understanding of the Soviet Union. Understanding and friendship amongst nations is a pre-requisite to peace, which we all desire.



7, JANTAR MANTAR ROAD,  
NEW DELHI - 1.

January 10, 1960.

*President, Indian National Congress*



## **BY WAY OF PREFACE**

**I HAD** an opportunity of visiting the U.S.S.R. as leader of a delegation of the Youth Congress of the A.I.C.C. in June 1958. On my return I had written down my impressions in the form of a few articles mainly for the benefit of our friends and co-workers. Later, when it was decided to publish them in a book, I revised and re-arranged the text and added a few chapters from my diary which I had maintained during the tour.

I have only attempted to set out my impressions as they were formed about matters which came to my notice during the tour. I had gone to the Soviet Union with an open mind and have tried to describe what I saw and experienced, without favour or prejudice.

This book is not meant to be a comparative study of different economic and political systems, nor does it contain a comprehensive account of many important developments which are taking place in the Soviet Union. The tremendous industrial and technological progress going on in Russia and their interesting educational experiments have received only passing reference, in so far as I had an opportunity to see these things for myself. Ours was a youth delegation visiting the U.S.S.R. at the invitation of their Committee of Youth Organisations, and as such most of our time was spent in visiting centres of youth activity and studying their youth and student organisations and their problems. Naturally, these aspects have received more emphasis in this narration.



Our trip to Russia was made under several handicaps. We did not have an interpreter of our own. The language problem is quite difficult in Russia where few people know either English or Hindi. Hence, we had to depend mostly on official interpreters provided by our hosts. Moreover, we did not have much free time to mix with the common people. My impressions should, therefore, be read against this background.

The Members of the Committee of Youth Organisations of the Soviet Union looked after us with great care and hospitality. I am, indeed, grateful to them for all their help and consideration.

After my visit to the Soviet Union I had the privilege of leading a similar delegation of the World Assembly of Youth, India, on a tour of the United States of America at the invitation of their Young Adult Council. I have added a chapter on "Russia and America" as I felt that the similarity between the people of these countries in spite of their widely divergent political and social customs was striking.

I must express my grateful thanks to the A.I.C.C. who afforded me the opportunity of leading the delegation to the U.S.S.R. and to the members of the delegation who gave me all the necessary cooperation during our stay there.

I am deeply grateful to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan for his kindness in writing a Foreword to the book.

Smt. Indira Gandhi who was then in charge of the Youth Department of the A.I.C.C. was responsible for our visit to the Soviet Union. At the time my manuscript was in press she was extremely busy and preoccupied with the cares of office as the President of the Indian National Congress, and was, moreover, not keeping good health. I owe her a deep debt of gratitude for kindly sparing some time to write an Introduction to the book.

**RAMKRISHNA BAJAJ**

## **. CONTENTS**

|                                    |        |     |
|------------------------------------|--------|-----|
| FOREWORD by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan   | ...    | 5   |
| INTRODUCTION by Smt. Indira Gandhi | ...    | 7   |
| BY WAY OF PREFACE                  | ... .. | 9   |
| LIFE IN THE SOVIET UNION           | ... .. | 13  |
| THE PARTY IN POWER                 | ... .. | 29  |
| THE YOUNG PIONEERS                 | ... .. | 38  |
| THE KOMSOMOL                       | ... .. | 51  |
| MEETING WITH THE YOUTH LEADERS     | ...    | 59  |
| MEETING WITH KHRUSHCHEV            | ... .. | 71  |
| FIRST YOUTH DAY                    | ... .. | 82  |
| A FOOTBALL MATCH IN "WHITE NIGHT"  | ...    | 89  |
| DAILY JOTTINGS                     | ... .. | 94  |
| RUSSIA AND AMERICA                 | ... .. | 142 |
| APPENDICES                         |        |     |
| I.                                 | ... .. | 153 |
| II.                                | ... .. | 159 |
| III.                               | ... .. | 163 |



# 1

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## LIFE IN THE SOVIET UNION

AT THE invitation of the Committee of Youth Organisations of the Soviet Union a youth delegation comprising seven persons—six men and one woman—was sent by the Indian National Congress on behalf of their Youth Department on a goodwill mission. When the representatives of the Soviet Committee had come at our invitation to attend the Annual Session of the Youth Congress at Lucknow in 1957, they reciprocated our gesture by inviting the Youth Congress to send a delegation to the Soviet Union for a return visit. Our visit to Russia was a result of this invitation. The delegation stayed in Russia for a month, and visited Moscow, Lenin-grad, Yalta (a sea resort on the Black Sea in Crimea), Kiev (the capital of Ukraine Republic), and Tashkent (the capital of Uzbekistan).

As their guests we were naturally not in a position to ask the questions we wanted to about the various aspects of life in the Soviet Union. We felt that we might embarrass them. The greatest difficulty with us was that we did not have an interpreter of our own with us. We had to depend on a Hindi and an English interpreter given to us by them. Moreover, most of the time we were busy with the programmes officially chalked out for us and were surrounded by the

people connected with the Soviet Youth Committee. Hence, we could not get enough time and opportunities for coming in closer contacts with the common man and having heart-to-heart talks with him. Besides, language was a great barrier.

In spite of these difficulties we could see many things in the Soviet Union—some good, some not so good. We owe it to our hosts to be fair in narrating our experiences, and to our countrymen to give a frank account of what we saw and felt during our stay there. I shall try briefly to put down my own impressions, without prejudice. In fact, it has been our endeavour to see life in the Soviet Union with an unbiassed mind. We went there with an open mind to learn and see things about a country which is as controversial as it is powerful.

Since we reached Moscow first, it will be appropriate to make a rapid survey of what impressed us most in the capital city. The Moscow University is a great institution in itself. It has thirteen colleges, six for the Natural Sciences and seven for Arts. The University has 22,000 students on its rolls. Of them 15,000 attend whole-day courses while 2,000 take only evening classes. Another 4,500 learn through regular correspondence courses and appear for examinations. The University is a grand and imposing structure, and has thousands of rooms and 150 lecture halls. It has beautiful gardens, parks and playgrounds.

Metro, the underground railway of Moscow is another achievement of the Soviet Union in recent times. There is no comparable underground railway of this kind anywhere in the European or Asian countries. Of course, I have not seen the underground railways of the United States but from what I have heard of them I can confidently say that the

Moscow railways are superior.\* It has now got a total length of 70 kilometres (43.5 miles) and has 47 beautifully constructed stations. Practically all stations have very good escalators. Each station is built of marble in a different architectural style, and has beautiful chandeliers, mural paintings and mosaic. Any country could be proud of such an achievement.

Moscow has a permanent Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition. Apart from the huge main pavilions, there are a number of small pavilions allotted to each Republic of the Soviet Union. The achievements of different plans are shown graphically. They regularly change the items in the exhibition and make the figures up-to-date. The figures shown therein indeed look impressive.

The Lenin Sports Stadium in Moscow, where the Youth Festival was held in 1957, is also a place of great interest. Apart from the main stadium which can seat a lakh of people, there are separate stadia for children's activities, gymnasiums, swimming pools and a covered stadium for dance, drama, shows on ice, etc.

The new housing scheme in Moscow is also fascinating. A new township is growing fast between the Moscow City and the aerodrome. Housing in the Soviet Union is cheap but inadequate. Most families live in one-room tenements. Each of the new buildings contains thousands of apartments. To find out a friend's place, you have not only to know the name of the street and the building, and the number of the room and the floor, but also the name of the dome, the number of the entrance gate, and the side of the building from which you have to enter.

Russia is moving very fast in the direction of industrial

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\* I have visited the U.S.A. subsequently, and can confirm that the above estimation of the Moscow railways is correct.

leadership of the world. They are concentrating their attention and harnessing their resources for producing more and more capital goods and industrialising the country. They are increasing the steel output at a very high speed. In the last 10 years the steel production has increased from 13 million tons to about 52 million tons per year — an increase of almost 400 per cent.

The Russians are making rapid progress in agricultural production as well, in which I was told they have already caught up with the progress made in the United States. It is their aim to catch up with the U.S.A. in all directions. In fact, they want to reach the American standard of living, and even surpass it. They have recently decided that the Ukraine, the granary of the Soviet Union, should divert one-fifth of its total land under cultivation for growing grapes. That obviously means that they have no shortage of wheat and, therefore, they want to divert their lands for producing more wine for which the demand seems to be increasing.

Russia's jet planes are very good. They go up in the sky to a height of about eight to nine miles and have very fast and wonderful flights, though there are not many amenities in them. The service also is scanty and poor. For example, in the jet we travelled in from Moscow to Tashkent, there was no provision for running hot water in the wash room or for serving meals. Not even soap and other toilet materials were kept. But the flight itself was excellent. It was smooth and perfect.

A word about Russian hospitality. The way we were looked after is a thing very difficult to describe. We were treated as honoured guests, and every comfort of ours was well looked after. Wherever we went we were received with great ovation and given the pride of place. In Kiev, people mobbed us with affection, and it became difficult even to

return to our hotel. The affection of the Soviet people for the Indian people is something which greatly impressed us. We were told that next to the Chinese, the people of India are held in the highest affection in Russia. Some people may imagine that the affection they show is pre-planned and organised, and that it is not spontaneous. I can vouch that it is not always so. Yet, I felt a sort of uniformity in the behaviour and approach of most Russians towards us. I felt that their minds have been trained so as to react in a particular way in a given circumstance. They have so much been used to act and react in a mass way. Today the whole population may welcome you with an open heart. Tomorrow they could probably also hate you with the same intensity if there is a shift in their policy and in the attitude of their leaders.

The Soviet Youth Committee had made it clear that we were completely free to go wherever we wanted to go and to meet and talk to people freely. We took advantage of whatever opportunities we got. Whenever they found time, the members of our delegation would go about walking on the streets, mix with people and talk to them and go about shopping. During our visits we came across many people who were very keen to talk to us, to know about life in India and also to tell us about conditions in their country. Some of them, professors and students, who knew English, would come to us of their own accord and interpret for us and help us in shopping, etc. When they knew that we came from India, they were very happy and talked more freely with us. But in spite of their obvious eagerness to befriend us and speak out unreservedly, I could observe a certain amount of hesitation and reluctance in them. It looked as though this was the result of long years of self-suppression. We told some of them that we would like to visit a Russian home to see how they lived and know what



their life was. But here too they seemed very unwilling to take us with them. On the whole, these intellectuals gave us the impression that the Russia we saw outwardly was in many respects different from what it actually is. It was obviously impossible for us to verify all that they said in view of the handicaps already mentioned.

Many of the things we could gather from these talks seemed to us worth serious consideration. One of the significant points was that Communists constituted not more than 10 to 15 per cent in Russia. Membership of a party is naturally bound to be a fraction of the total population. But their point was that even the supporters of the Communist Party on the whole were numerically in a minority. Even then the Communists were ruling Russia. They ascribed the prevalence of secrecy and terror in Russia even after forty years' rule of the Communist Party to the fact that the minority ruled over the majority. Conditions have, no doubt, changed to some extent in recent years in the post-Stalin period.

Even now, according to them, the Soviet citizens had no freedom to go abroad. Those who go out in delegations and otherwise are regular Communists. Private citizens could never hope to get a passport to leave the country, even for visiting their next-door neighbour, Finland. The Communists are, however, conscious of their recent achievements and feel confident that they have something to show to the world. They have, therefore, opened the gates of Russia to the outside world, specially to the people from under-developed countries. But they do not want the Russian people to go out and see life in other countries and compare the living standards obtaining in Russia with those of other advanced

foreign newspapers in Russia except

the *Daily Worker*, the Communist newspaper of England. The Russian papers hardly carry any news or views which do not conform to the viewpoint of the Government and the Party. They usually indulge in praise of the Government and the Party, spotlight the figures of production and their achievements, and prominently feature the speeches of Khrushchev and other Soviet leaders. Although they printed Khrushchev's letters to Eisenhower fully, Eisenhower's letters did not appear in them. Many of the Russians we met were surprised when they were told that our newspapers could criticise and write against Pandit Nehru or any other leader freely and express views against the Government without any fear or risk. They told us that they would be happy to get freedom at least to the extent obtaining in China; but they were afraid that they could never get it to the extent the Indians enjoy.

We asked them the obvious question that if the Communists were a minority and still ruled over them, why could they not remove them through elections, particularly since their own constitution provided for democratic elections. To this they replied that to have provision for democratic elections in the constitution was one thing and to have regular democratic elections in practice a different thing altogether. It is obvious that since no five people can always agree, there would always be differences of opinion and there is bound to be scope for political majorities and minorities. Yet there were no contests in Russia. As a matter of fact, a group of Communist leaders decided beforehand who should contest a particular seat and nobody else was allowed to contest. If anybody dared to contest in view of the constitutional provision, his life was made miserable, and he was likely to be liquidated. Even the most influential people like Comrades Molotov, Malenkov, Bulganin and Zhukov trembled before the mighty power held by the Communist

Party. What could an ordinary citizen do and how could he raise his head against this tyranny? Therefore, the Russian people realise that there is no alternative left for them but to tolerate the rule of the minority over them. This has also resulted in most of the people becoming uninterested in who is ruling them and how they rule. They are more interested in their day-to-day life, their daily bread and higher and higher standard of living.

कोउ नृप होउ हमहि का हानी  
चेरि छाड़ि अब होब कि रानी।

They also felt that although Russia has invented the Sputnik, a great achievement indeed, what good had it done to the common man? They complained that they do not have sufficient houses to live in. On an average eight to ten people live in single room apartments without adequate facilities for bath or latrine for which they have to queue up for a long time. They realise that within the cost of one Sputnik a whole new township could be built up. Instead of catering to people's comforts the Soviet Government is spending more and more on the military and armaments. Although their prestige in the world might have gone up due to the Sputniks, it has not made them any better off at home.

Every one in the Soviet Union is made to work hard. The income of the ordinary man is not large enough to satisfy all his needs. If he produces more than the fixed quantum he would earn more than the minimum wages. He, therefore, tries to work as hard as possible during his regular daily working hours. Even after doing strenuously hard work for eight hours during which he gives his best, he tries to work overtime, or to work elsewhere, to add to his income.

The standard of living of the Soviet people is not very high. It is in many respects better compared to that of India, no doubt. But if we compare it with European standards as we should, because Russia is largely a European country, it is much lower. True, they do not have the problem of unemployment. As a matter of fact, their country occupies one-sixth of the world's land while their population of about 20 crores is only one-tenth of the world population. They have enough work to provide for the citizens. At times, they even face shortage of labour in the country. Yet, although work is given to everybody, one finds poor and half-fed people very commonly, and also beggars once in a while.

The living conditions in the Soviet Union are much poorer than in other parts of Europe. It is true that Russia's attainment of full employment looks a big achievement to us who belong to underdeveloped areas of Asia and Africa. But in view of the fact that there is not much of unemployment in other European countries as well, and moreover their standard of living is much higher, the Russian achievement cannot actually be considered as very significant.

There seems to be very little leisure or relaxation for the ordinary Soviet citizen to enjoy life, and, therefore, one does not usually find a look of freshness on his face in spite of good and healthy climate. The women usually work as much as men in the factories, farms, schools, etc. In addition, they have to look after the household and the comforts of their husbands and children. Hence, they are forced to work harder than the men. We found that delicacy was missing from the complexions of most of the Soviet women, because of the hard life they have to lead.

The shortage of consumer goods was universal and felt by everybody in all spheres of life. Except for very few things which constitute the bare necessities of life, like food

and shelter, nothing is easily available. The costs are also very high.

A good woollen suit costs about 2,000 roubles (Re. 1 = 1.2 roubles). Any one having two good woollen suits is considered to be a capitalist! A cotton shirt costs 60 roubles and a silk shirt 150 roubles. A pair of shoes which will ordinarily cost Rs. 30 in India can be had only for 250 roubles. We were told by the Planning Minister of the Ukraine that the production of shoes in the Soviet Union averages only 0.7 per person per year, which is extremely low considering the climate of Russia.

An ordinary ladies' handbag made of leather costs about Rs. 84, whereas a very ordinary small bath towel is available only for Rs. 42 or more. Small sour lime costs Rs. 13 per seer; lime Rs. 3 each; long bread Rs. 3; one roll of bread Rs. 2; butter 200 grms. Rs. 5; pure ghee 200 grams. Rs. 7; skimmed milk Rs. 3 per seer; pure milk Rs. 10 per seer; a very ordinary tooth brush Rs. 3; a cake of ordinary bath soap of the quality used by us for washing clothes Rs. 3; cotton socks Rs. 6; tennis shoes Rs. 27 per pair. Electrical goods are comparatively cheaper. An electric gramophone of good quality with loudspeaker is available for Rs. 292 and a television set for only Rs. 666.

The facilities for education are, however, excellent, and everyone gets opportunities to show his or her talents. But as far as free medical services were concerned, we were told that they were not satisfactory yet. Every doctor has to look after more than 40 families a day with the result that patients going to the doctor have to wait for a long time. Therefore, those who could afford preferred to go to a private doctor and get treated by paying his fees. Although they have made considerable progress in medicine and surgery, and there are a large number of doctors in the Soviet Union,

their general standard of free medical services is rather low. That is why a doctor is paid a minimum wage of 600 roubles, whereas a taxi driver gets nearly double the amount.

While travelling in Crimea we found many houses with small plots of land attached to them, which were privately owned. Some people lived permanently in some of these houses. Others were used as country houses by people who lived in the city and made an additional income from their farms, the produce of which they were allowed to sell in the open market, which they too call "bazaar". There are official markets all over the country where produce of the collective farms is sold at rates fixed by the Government. In the bazaars there is no fixed rate. Individuals can sell their produce at whatever price they can fetch. Usually the prices in the bazaars are higher because the products available there are better and can be obtained out of season as well.

It becomes quite obvious even to a new-comer that there is no equality in the Soviet Union. The Planning Minister of the Ukraine Republic himself admitted that the minimum wage is 600 roubles and maximum 15,000 roubles. According to official figures also the ratio of the highest to the lowest income is 25:1. My independent enquiries revealed, however, that the ratio is at least a hundred to one, if not more. I have seen people working for less than 300 roubles per month. Some army officials, ministers and others get as much as 30,000 roubles a month. Over and above, we were told, these people get many other facilities which are not available to the common man. They get their houses, motor cars and many other perquisites free of charge. They could deposit their savings in banks and add to their private property. High Party functionaries have their country houses where they can spend their week-ends. Even in the city these people live in big apartments with many

rooms while the common man suffers from acute housing shortage.

It is worth noting that while the income-tax rate in Russia for incomes below 2,000 roubles per month is 10%, the highest rate is only 13%!

Domestic servants, especially women, are considered to be on duty all the 24 hours of the day (Sundays excepted) in households having children. They get about 300 roubles per month and food. In hotels and elsewhere whenever we offered tips they were appreciated by the recipients, but accepted only when offered in the absence of anybody else.

A factory worker on an average gets about 600 to 800 roubles. A doctor gets about 600 roubles. A chief lecturer who is not an M.A. gets 1,200 to 1,600 roubles and one who is an M.A. gets 2,500 to 3,200 roubles. An assistant professor starts with 2,000 going upto 4,000 per month. A professor with a doctorate gets about 4,500. If he works part-time he gets 1,600 roubles. The Director of the Institute of International Affairs is paid 7,000 roubles, and so it goes on. An Academician will get anywhere between 20,000 to 30,000 roubles.

We were told that personal preferences and favouritism play a part in matters of appointments and promotions. The heads of departments are usually technologists, but preference is given to the members of the Communist Party. We were also informed that all key positions including those of factory-managers, heads of educational institutions, etc. are given only to the members of the Communist Party. It was, however, difficult to verify the statement.

We were greatly surprised to learn that even on the main streets of Moscow, certain parts were reserved where only the cars of high officials and party bosses could pass. And only the high-ups could blow their horns on the streets!

We gathered that there is little contact between the Government officials and bureaucrats on the one side and the common man on the other. To meet the Ukrainean Planning Minister we were taken into a huge building where the offices of the Ministry were located. When we passed from one end of the building to the other, we hardly saw a single face barring that of a gate-keeper and the secretary of the Minister. It cannot be supposed that the Government took care of every one of the people's problems of its own accord and hence it was not necessary for the public to meet the ministers and officials to represent their grievances. It is hard to believe that the people in the Soviet Union, or for that matter anywhere in the world, have no problems which require the personal attention of the ministers and officials. In India the Government secretariats are full of visitors. But in the Soviet Union it looks as though the people are afraid to call on the ministers and officials or probably they feel that theirs will be a voice in the wilderness.

It was apparent that, apart from the army men, the bureaucrats were all-powerful. I heard even the Communist Party men giving vent to their dislike for the behaviour of the bureaucrats; they said that the bureaucrats are inefficient, slow and careless. Even the high-placed in the Party did not know the salary drawn by Khrushchev. When I became curious and questioned why they did not know it, they replied that they were simply not interested in such things.

The sports activities are increasing in the Soviet Union. Football is the most popular game and attracts great crowds. Big stadia are built in the main cities of the Union. Facilities for sports are also available in the universities and other educational institutions.

Ballets, concerts, operas and dramas are on the increase



and their standard is good. The people are fond of music and musical dance dramas. We saw a circus and a puppet show, and a Russian film entitled "Heron's are flying in a row." The acting and photography of the film were of a high order. The heroine had to go through many physical and mental tortures when her lover had gone to the war front. She acted so well that though we did not know the language we were deeply moved. We also saw a ballet, an art form for which Russia is deservedly famous.

We were taken to see various sanatoria specially in Yalta. The facilities at the sanatoria were attractive. The atmosphere was healthy and gay. We enjoyed swimming and boating and playing volley ball with the inmates. They say that these sanatoria are reserved for the deserving young workers and farmers who come from distant places to rest and relax. Some people, however, pointed out that all such places were mostly reserved for the Party bosses and their favourites and only a few persons really came there from the working class.

I found among the Russian people in general a deep feeling of national pride. Whether they are Communists or non-Communists they are equally proud of everything that is Russian, past or present. Even the Communists have pride in their past heritage of the pre-revolutionary era. They showed things of the past to us with a feeling of great self-importance. They have deep respect for Peter the Great and even for Ivan the Terrible. The present-day Russians feel that they were great and powerful kings who had made Russia stronger. During their times they were progressive, although in the present context their system was out of date and retrograde.

The Russians are very proud of the art gallery in Leningrad. It is a big museum where interesting and

important collections of the work of the top-most European artists of the past are preserved. This is supposed to be the fourth best art gallery in the world. Even the palaces and gardens of the old czars are preserved by the Communist regime as national monuments and they take pride in showing these palaces and gardens to the visiting foreigners.

One thing struck me in this connection: that they have developed a kind of complex about their achievements. It is well known that they have great achievements to their credit in certain fields, but it looks as though they feel somewhat guilty for lagging behind in others. It was apparent from the fact that whenever they showed anything of interest to us they would immediately ask us whether we liked it or not. A word of appreciation from us would make them happy and satisfied. They could not help asking our opinions even about things of obvious greatness like the Metro and the Moscow University and then beaming with satisfaction after hearing our opinion.

I remember in this connection my visit to a machine tool factory in Leningrad. Frankly, I was not at all impressed by the factory. It was not properly organised. Things were lying scattered all over. There was no cleanliness whatsoever. To me the factory looked mismanaged with more people employed than were necessary. Soon after our visit to the factory one of the Press correspondents accompanying us asked my opinion. As I did not like the idea of praising something I did not appreciate, I told her, avoiding the question, that we were happy to have got the opportunity to visit the factory named after Lenin and which has received the Lenin Prize, etc., etc. She went on asking me about the working of the factory, but she did not get a direct answer from me. She was so much annoyed that she could not hide her dissatisfaction, and walked away from us in despair.

At most of the places we visited there were visitors' books in which we were asked to write down our impressions. Whenever we went to a new city, our message was recorded at the airport itself for transmission over the radio. Good coverage was also given to our tour by the newspapers.

Another curious thing I noticed was that the organisers of the different institutions we saw were not at all interested in knowing about conditions and other things in our country. Of course, I am not referring to the common Russian people. We did not have many occasions to talk to them because of language difficulty; but we found that even within these limitations they were indeed interested to know about the conditions in our country. But the institutional heads were all the time trying to impress us about what they did and their achievements, with a lot of statistics. This was a surprising attitude. Except in one or two places nobody asked us about our Second Five-Year Plan, about our achievements after independence, our future plans or our progress in general. The figures given to us were, no doubt, interesting, but at some places we felt that there was a tendency to exaggerate. Sometimes during our supplementary questions and sometimes on verification from other sources we found that the figures were not always correct. The figures they gave us at the Industrial Exhibition, for example, were so impressive that if they were really correct Russia should have made much greater progress and there should have been much more prosperity than we could see today.

## 2

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### THE PARTY IN POWER

IN THE Soviet Union members of the Communist Party seem to be all-powerful everywhere. Every Party member, or for that matter even a member of the Komsomol, carries an identity card. This is a passport to go anywhere and do whatever he or she likes without hindrance. In Moscow one day we were being taken to the Television Station for our broadcast. Since we were in a hurry our driver was taking the car faster than the speed limit prescribed. When a traffic policeman stopped our car, our interpreter got down, showed his Party card, and said a few words. This was enough for the traffic police to let us go.

When we were travelling by road towards the Crimean airport at Simferopol, on the way, a railway level-crossing was closed, but there was some time for the train to pass. Our interpreter, who was not a local man either, got down from the car and, without caring for the objection of the woman on duty, broke the seals, threw open the door and allowed our cars to pass. The woman kept on looking at us with surprise, bewildered at what the man was doing and not knowing how to stop him.

In aeroplanes or wherever we went we were given

special treatment with special places reserved for us. We were going from Simferopol to Yalta, the sea resort, famous because of the conference in 1945 of the Big Three of the last war — Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt. It was a 150-mile drive through country tract. We were eleven people — the seven of us and four friends from the local youth organisation. Four big cars had been kept at our disposal. They had arranged for a motor-cycle to be ahead of us as a pilot, driven by a local policeman in uniform. While driving along he was continuously guiding each and every car which was in front of us, asking them either to stop or drive extreme right so that we could easily overtake them. The cars coming from the opposite direction were asked to slow down and drive extreme left so that there might not be difficulty for our cars to pass. We were told that in order to avoid accidents a request was generally made to the local police to provide an escort to guests from outside as this was a risky mountainous road with many sharp curves. As a police escort is provided in our country only to important visiting dignitaries, we felt rather awkward and embarrassed at the importance given to a non-official delegation like ours.

Nobody doubts the Power of the Communist Party and of its individual members. With the help of their omnipotent identity cards they can do anything! They do not require a specific letter for any specific work; likewise the Government officials do not need specific instructions from the higher authorities for doing the work of the Communist Party members. The direct approach of a Communist member is enough. It is all done in the name of the Party; and the Party functions, in the ultimate analysis, in the interests of the people as a whole, according to them. But actually it is the Party members who reap the benefits, and nobody can thwart them. Complete secrecy is maintained and the

**Government runs by generating fear. In spite of the talk of liberalisation, the people are sceptical and afraid. However, the fear is not so widespread and enormous as in Stalin's days; but all the same life is still not easy.**

**We were told by the senior officials of the Komsomol, the premier youth organisation of the country, that one of their activities was to look after the interest of the youth everywhere, including the youth working in factories and farms. The Komsomol wields considerable influence. For example, we were informed by some Komsomol officials that the general manager of a factory, himself a well-known scientist, did not look after the young workers in the manner he should have done; hence they would see to it that the scientist was removed from the post.**

**The only children's organisation of the Soviet Union is the Young Pioneers, with a membership of 14.5 million. It is controlled by the Komsomol. It has fifty thousand full-time paid workers. They are appointed and controlled by the Komsomol, but paid from the Government exchequer by the Ministry of Education.**

**The Komsomol in turn is the only youth organisation in the Soviet Union and has a membership of 18 million. This organisation is controlled and dominated by the Communist Party. Its budget runs into millions of roubles most of which is again met by the Government. We could not, however, know much about the budget or funds of the Communist Party itself, their sources, etc., but large amounts indirectly came to it from the Government exchequer in the form of aid to the organisations controlled by the Party. All such organisations are utilised to boost up the Communist Party.**

**The children's organisation is very good and the training**

it imparts to the younger generation is wholesome and useful. Children are healthy, bright and intelligent. But I wonder why they are made to take an oath of allegiance to the Communist Party. If there is no conflict in the Communist society, if there is no clash between the mutual interests of the Soviet people, if the Government represents the interest of the workers, peasants and others, and hence, as they claim, there is no need of opposition parties, then why should it be necessary to spend such enormous amounts from the Government exchequer to boost up the Communist Party day in and day out? Why should the children's and youth organisations whose expenditure is also borne by the Government remain under the complete control of the Communist Party and not of the Government? Hundreds of thousands of workers paid by the Government are under the control of the Communist Party which takes work from them which is ultimately meant to strengthen the Party. They claim that their constitution is democratic, and that they hold elections on democratic lines because they accept the principles of democracy to be the best. But one fails to understand how all these things can be in keeping with the principles of democracy.

In the Komsomol they claim they have now introduced free elections at the level of the primary units. However, there is no secret ballot. They told us that it was felt by the last Communist Party Congress that it was no more necessary to keep voting secret at that level. Freedom could be given to voters to elect according to their choice. Obviously, it meant that freedom of voting and of frankly expressing one's opinion does not exist at any other level.

We were told by Com. Varanovsky, First Deputy Minister for Planning for the Republic of Ukraine, that the constituent Republics had now been given more power,

though decentralisation had always been in vogue. After the first revolution, he said, since they were short of qualified technicians and scientists all the industries were centralised under the Central Government. Since they now have enough scientists they wanted to decentralise the industries. By decentralisation they could eliminate delays in bureaucratic procedure, overlapping and wrong decisions due to inadequate information because they could take decisions after studying the situation on the spot and also because the situation in different places and their requirements varied. Formerly the Republics had about 40% of the industries under them. Now the number has increased to 90%. Since the Republics solve their problems themselves now the disposal of work has become convenient and quicker. Their rights too have increased.

Further he said, the decisions of the Central Government are taken in consultation with the Republics. Out of the things they produce the Centre takes decisions regarding 409 items required for the whole country. On the Central Planning Commission there are representatives of all Republics and there they state the requirements and the production potential of their respective Republics. Ultimately, after studying the requirements of all, decisions are taken on how much to produce and how much to allot to each Republic. Once the Centre decides how much each Republic has to produce, the rest is left to the discretion of the Republic to implement. Because of the decentralisation, it is claimed that production has increased by 11% over the last year.

It seems that travelling within Russia — for Russians themselves — is very much restricted. We were surprised to find that even top workers of the Youth Committees who were looking after us in Leningrad had never made a trip to Moscow, although it is only a night's journey by train.



There seems to be some sort of liberalisation since the death of Stalin. Stalin had become the hero of the Russians especially during wartime. They knew that they could never win the war without a strong man who could keep Russia together and also deal with the allied powers with a strong hand. That is why soldiers died in the last war with these words on their lips: "I die for the sake of the motherland and for Stalin." Winning of the war was all-important for the survival of Russia; hence to a man they rallied round Stalin. After the war, Stalin took full advantage of his popularity, exploited the situation and became more of a dictator than ever before. He wanted only yes-men around him and all others were removed from the scene. A great reign of terror prevailed throughout the country. This, of course, could not go on for a long time; it was inevitable that some relaxation should come. The present leaders of Russia do not have such achievements to their credit to continue the old hold over the masses. If they wanted to keep their power intact without becoming unpopular, some kind of relief to the common man was unavoidable.

The official attitude towards Stalin now is that he was a great man, with great achievements to his credit for the Soviet Union, and his name would go down in history for ever. But they feel that he also made some mistakes. They are now trying to rectify the mistakes he committed, particularly the personality cult which Stalin built up. They say, "We have now exposed it completely and we have benefited by that exposure. People were sent to prison and killed without reason in the past. Now we have corrected this and we hope that the law will not be broken any more." They feel that they have so many enemies within the country and outside that they have to be very vigilant, careful and united. They believe that a great task has been entrusted to them

to fulfil which they must themselves find the way. Obviously they would make mistakes and learn by trial and error. The Chinese will not have that amount of difficulty, for they can learn from the experiences and mistakes of the Russians and correct themselves.

The Party members in Russia feel that now the power has been much more broad-based than during the days of Stalin. Though Khrushchev is the Prime Minister as well as the First Secretary of the Party, as Stalin was, all the power is not concentrated in his hands. Decisions are made not by him alone, but by the Party as a whole. Not only the Presidium, but other members of the Party have a hand in deciding upon the basic policies. This attitude itself shows that concentration of power is not appreciated by the members of the Party themselves. But it seems that while the Communist Party members want to apply the principles of democracy, they would like to have power in their own hands — democracy for themselves, but not for others.

The position is something like this: If one man becomes powerful he wants to keep power to himself. If he is not able to remain all powerful, the power is shared amongst a small group and the group tries to keep the power to itself. If the smaller group cannot do so, it shares the power with a larger group, and it goes on in this manner. It seems that here the mentality of a third class railway passenger is working in the administration. As soon as a new passenger is about to get into the compartment everybody in the compartment unitedly resists and tries to prevent the new-comer from coming in, but in spite of the resistance, if the new-comer succeeds in getting in, he becomes one of them and joins them in trying to stop fresh people from coming in and sharing the space with them. And so the struggle continues at every halt!

It seems to me that in Russia also due to this process the power will have to be gradually decentralised and shared by many more people, unless of course in the meanwhile a very strong dictator from the military or the Party emerges all powerful once again.

It passes one's comprehension how the Communist Party leaders have succeeded in keeping the common people in complete darkness even in these enlightened days of the 20th century. The generality of people are ignorant about the conditions prevalent in the rest of the world. They do not know about other people's life, their conditions, standard of living and way of thinking. The Russians are fed continuously on one-sided news which is usually exaggerated and always biassed. How they have been successful in keeping such a big population so ignorant about the world remains an enigma to me. I do not know why they find it necessary to do so at all, and that too at such a sacrifice and cost. The enigma becomes all the more shocking in view of the fact that they not only rule their own country but their influence extends almost over half the world. To do this without the active support of most of their own countrymen is really remarkable, and incomprehensible. One does not know how long it can go on in this way. It looks as though there will be a stronger control from the military soon or the Party itself will split and there will be a revolt. Their top leaders like Molotov, Malenkov, Bulganin and Zhukov were removed from the scene altogether in a matter of minutes. How far these things can go on and how long the people will stand it peacefully are the questions which naturally agitate the minds of people everywhere.

Taking everything into account, I am sure, the people in Russia are making progress. Their standard of living is going up. Their military strength is also increasing. But one

is inclined to question: At what cost these achievements? I did not find much happiness among the common people. They are made to overwork. There is no leisure nor pleasure in their lives. They lead a life of uncertainty. Everybody wants more and more material benefits all the time, but they are not getting even that. In spite of the progress they are making, in spite of the power they are wielding in the world today, the common man does not derive much benefit. I am convinced that our democratic system ensuring individual liberty is the best way for our country. The speed of our progress may be slow, but all the same it is steady, and the people will live in peace and happiness in spite of the lower standard of living for the time-being.

These views are of course not comprehensive. As a matter of fact they could not be so. In a short visit it is impossible to know about the exact conditions in such a big country. All the same, I have tried to give my impressions as I felt them in a frank and unbiassed manner. It is quite possible that I may have to revise some of my opinions if I get an opportunity to study the conditions in Russia further.

Before I close. I would like to sound a note of warning against the tendency of equating the Russian people with the Communist regime in Russia. A clear distinction has to be drawn between the two. The Russian people are the same about whom one has read in the novels of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. They are proud of their old traditions and culture. They are warmhearted and hospitable. They are simple and good; in fact, like the people of any other country. But the Communist regime is different. It is secretive, dictatorial, totalitarian, amoral, indulging in terror and regimentation of mind and body. The Communist regime, therefore, does not necessarily reflect the hopes and aspirations of the Russian people.

# 3

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## THE YOUNG PIONEERS

ONE OF the most interesting and important movements we were privileged to see and study in the Soviet Union was the Young Pioneers. On the 19th of June we visited the office of the Supreme Council of the Young Lenin Pioneers organisation. Comrade Fidotva, Deputy Chairman, and Comrade Gereva explained to us in detail the activities of the Young Pioneers. We were presented with a bugle and a drum on behalf of the Young Pioneers as a token of their good wishes for the children of our country.

The Young Pioneers organisation was founded 36 years ago as a mass political organisation for school-going children. It was organised on a voluntary basis.

The school boys and girls who join the Young Pioneers have to take the following oath: "I, Young Pioneer, of the Soviet Union in front of my comrades promise to love my Soviet Motherland, to live, study and struggle as great Lenin told us and as the Communist Party is teaching us."

On taking the oath, the Young Pioneer is given a red tie and accepted in the organisation.

***Aims:*** The sponsors of the movement have a very clear picture of what a Young Pioneer is expected to be. A Young Pioneer is a lover of his Motherland and of the Communist Party. He prepares himself to enter the Komsomol. He revives the memory of those who perished in the struggle for freedom and prosperity of the Soviet Motherland. He has children friends all over the world. He studies hard, behaves properly and politely. He is a comrade, he takes care of younger children and helps elders. He takes care of the people's property. He is bold and courageous and is not afraid of difficulties. He always speaks the truth; he is careful to keep up the honour of his unit. He goes out for sports every morning for warming up. He loves nature; he is the protector of greenery, useful birds and animals. The Young Pioneer, in short, is a model for the others.

***Organisation:*** Pioneer units are attached mostly to schools and help in their work. There are also Pioneer units at some camps and boarding houses. In a school there is a basic Pioneer unit under which there are many smaller units functioning. There are 30 to 40 Pioneers in one unit. Usually a class is equal to one unit. If in a big residential house there are many boys from the same school, they also form a Pioneer unit. They have, like the Komsomol, district Pioneer organisations; and also regional, urban and central councils.

Pioneers themselves are in charge of the units. The secretary and leaders are elected by the Pioneer comrades. The Komsomol directs, in general, the activities of the Young Pioneers. The Komsomol appoints one chief leader for every large unit. The best Komsomol workers are sent for these jobs.

A Pioneer unit is run by an elected Young Pioneer leader, a Komsomol leader as an adviser, and a whole-time

paid worker appointed by the Komsomol. There are in all about 50,000 such workers who are treated as whole-time teachers and paid by the Education Ministry. The children, not being earners, do not have to pay any fees. The Central Council of Trade Unions provides 165 million roubles for the general work of the Young Pioneers including sports, tournaments, etc., for children apart from the money they give for organising camps.

*Activities:* The membership of the movement is nearly 14.5 million, whose age limit is between 10 to 15, out of 30 million school-going children between the ages of 7 and 17.

There are seven lakh small units and two lakh large units equalling the number of schools. Primary schooling in Russia is for four years, secondary for three years and higher secondary for another three years. In all, schooling is done for ten years. Most of the recreational activities of schools are looked after by the Young Pioneer units which organise the spare time of their members. Each school or unit of houses has a playground attached to it. There are also some 10,000 special institutions looking after children's sports and tourist centres and for training young technicians. The Young Pioneers are encouraged to take more and more to technical lines of their choice. There are special departments for young aircraftsmen, young ship-builders and the like.

The Government also gives special recognition to the meritorious services of the Young Pioneers. A recent example is that of a Young Pioneer, Lola Karparskaya who was given a special order of merit for saving a child from being burnt. Another boy, who saved a number of sheep from a snow-storm, has had his name entered into the book of honour.

Children are encouraged to go on hikes and travels. Great importance is attached to the way in which the summer vacation is spent. Summer camps are conducted everywhere, in the cities and in the countryside and kolkhozes (collective farms). Nearly three million children attend camps in the countryside every year. The budget for the camps organised in the countryside during last year was one billion and 600 million roubles. Teachers for such camps are provided by the Central Council of the Young Pioneers. The camps attach the greatest value to manual labour.

Every boy and girl has a special Pioneer's uniform, which is to be worn on special occasions. Only the colours are obligatory, and not the form of dress. The dress can be of the individual's choice. The uniforms are purchased by the parents.

The Pioneers organise campaigns for collecting useful waste material like iron scrap which they sell to the factories. The Young Pioneers from Ukraine once collected 70 wagon loads of cotton which they presented to a factory in Leningrad.

We visited Pioneer camps at various places during our stay in the Soviet Union. One of the first such camps we visited on the 25th of June. It was in the Artek near Yalta on the Black Sea, and was called Union Lenin Pioneer Camp. There were 335 Young Pioneers, boys and girls, drawn from different Republics of the Soviet Union. The children looked happy and handsome in their uniforms, and they were polite and cheerful. They received us with a great ovation. Their affection touched our hearts deeply.

It was a camp held for 40 days. The day of our visit was the last day in the camp. The children told us that



although the camp was very good it could not be compared to one's home. They were happy at the prospect of returning home for some of them confessed they were home-sick. It was a pleasant surprise to find an Indian girl, Kalpana Shahani, amongst the campers. She spoke very good Russian and had become almost one of them.

A good part of the children's time was spent in playing on the beach and swimming in the sea. They also had their own small museum. The decoration and arrangement of the museum was handled by the children and most of the collections were their own handiwork. At lunch they looked after us very well in spite of the language difficulty. After lunch they made us rest and then gave us some music. They also asked Pratima to sing some Indian songs for them. We presented to them some Indian gramophone records.

The camp was of a sanatorium type. Four camps are held every year in that place. There are of longer duration and one is a seasonal camp held in summer. The permanent staff remains the same. The annual budget for the four camps is 26 million roubles.

The daily routine of the camp is 7 a.m. getting up; 8 a.m. breakfast; 9 a.m. at the beach, excursions, medical examination, studying in different circles, swimming, playing, etc. The subjects taught include photography, carpentry, electrical and technical drawing, model making, nature study, literature, dancing, music, chess and embroidery for girls. Among sports, they play volley-ball and basket ball. At 1.00 p.m. they have lunch and then rest for two hours. At 5.00 afternoon tea, and then sports. Some have boat trips on the sea. This continues up to 8 o'clock when dinner is taken. After dinner, there is singing or reading, cinema shows, writing letters, etc., up to 10 p.m. when everybody has to compulsorily go to bed.

The children are first divided into ten different groups. The average number in each group is about 30. They choose their own groups and select definite subjects for everyday study. Although study is regarded as important, attendance at classes is not compulsory.

There are many other such camps in the vicinity along the coast. The camp we saw, however, is the latest and the most famous in the Soviet Union. It was indeed very well organised and attractive. Pandit Nehru and Shrimati Indira Gandhi had also visited this camp during their tour of the Soviet Union.

The Central Komsomol Committee decides quotas for each Republic and the Republics fix up quotas for districts, and so on, down to the school Pioneer committees. Only the best Pioneers are selected and sent here. It is considered a great honour for children to be selected to participate in this camp. Forty-five per cent of the seats are reserved for the children of parents killed in the war. Priority is given to those who are good at their studies, and as also to needy children. We were told that the selection is done on merits as well as needs. The Pioneers themselves suggest the panel of names from which finally the Teachers' Council makes the final selection. Before leaving the camp every Pioneer gets a certificate showing details of the subjects he has studied and the subjects for which he has an aptitude.

On an earlier occasion when we were travelling from Simferopol by road to Yalta, we had our dinner in a good restaurant on a hill top. It was about 8 p.m. From the top of the hill we noticed a camp fire. On being told that it was a Young Pioneers' Camp, we got down and joined the camp with their permission. The youngsters received us with great enthusiasm and made us take part in their regular activities as if it all had happened in the ordinary course. They were

in their uniforms, boys and girls. Altogether there were about 400 of them playing and singing and making merry around the camp fire. These children of the Alushtha Pioneer Camp also danced and sang for us and made Pratima sing for them. It was not a pre-arranged programme. We were especially happy that we could take part in such a camp without any prior intimation and have a look at their normal activities.

We were about to leave Yalta for Kiev on the 28th of June. Early in the morning, just before we left, about 80 Young Pioneers with their group leader arrived at our hotel without any previous engagement to meet us informally and to bid us good-bye! They presented us with their colours, and wished to convey through us their love and good wishes for the Indian children. They were full of enthusiasm and good spirits, and were simply adorable. Their hearty send-off touched us all the more because it was spontaneous.

On the 30th of June, we visited another interesting Pioneer camp near Kiev. It had not yet been named, having just been opened. It was meant for young geologists. During summer they have three camps at this place, the duration of each camp being 26 days. During the remaining nine months smaller camps of different durations are also held. They admit children of the ages of 7 to 14 from all over the Ukraine and even from distant places like Leningrad and the Arctic regions.

There were 240 inmates at the camp. When we arrived there, it was their time for taking rest. Just before we reached the camp, a messenger on motor-cycle preceded us to give them advance intimation of our arrival. The children had lined up on both sides of the entrance with flowers in their hands to receive us. As we walked in, they kept on showering flowers on us from both sides. This was quite a thrilling

experience for all of us. There was even a big placard welcoming us, which said: "We the Pioneers of the Ukraine welcome our Indian friends."

The children became our friends almost immediately. They were full of affection, and groups of about 10 to 15 children took each one of us in different directions to show us the camp and its activities. The camp was situated in a very large area with big gardens and playfields. When the children took us round, there were no teachers or elders with them. They took charge of us very confidently and showed us round the whole camp and explained to us their activities. They collected cherries and strawberries in large quantities and offered them to us; they were eager that we should finish all the fruits collected by them. They told us about each tree and plant, as to who had planted it, they or their predecessors, and how it was beneficial for the camp. They enjoyed working in the garden and fields.

After lunching at the camp, I gathered eight children, all boys, around me. They were ten to twelve years of age. I asked them through an interpreter what they knew about India. The replies were instantaneous. Without hesitation, they said: "India is a big country. Bombay and Calcutta are amongst the biggest cities of the world. India is very rich. There is a lot of gold, silver and other ores. They never have winter there. The Indian people want peace."

The following are some of the questions I asked and their answers thereto:-

*Q.* Why did you welcome us with such warmth?

*A.* You have come from a country which is situated so far away.

*Q.* Was your warmth because we came from far, or was it because we have come from India?

**A.** Oh! it is because you have come from India.

**Q.** Why this special treatment to Indians?

**A.** Because we want to develop friendship with them.

**Q.** Who asked you to make friends with us?

**A.** Lenin.

**Q.** Why?

**A.** Because if we have friendship with India and other countries there will never be a war.

**Q.** Do you know anyone from India?

**A.** Yes. Jawaharlal Nehru, Radhakrishnan, Raj Kapur and Nargis.

**Q.** What do you know about Jawaharlal Nehru?

**A.** He is the Prime Minister of India and he runs the whole Government. When he goes to foreign countries he meets the top leaders of those countries. He wants that there should be trade between all countries of the world. He has one daughter. We have seen them on television. They have presented two elephants to the children of Kiev. Our leaders have presented them with an aeroplane.

A twelve-year old boy said he wanted India to industrialise itself and to build more ships. When the British ruled India, Nehru was in prison for eight years.

**Q.** Do you like Nehru?

**A.** Oh yes. He has a kindly face and a sweet smile. He is simple. We like him because he loves work and knows how to do it.

**Q.** Have you ever heard of Mahatma Gandhi?

**A.** Yes. There was something written about him in our newspapers.

It was indeed a very interesting chat. Their general knowledge was impressive and their behaviour charming.

In the evening they took us to their playing fields, where we joined them in an interesting game of volley-ball. After the game was over they led us to the meeting hall, and entertained us with dance and music. One of the youngsters, who was sitting by my side, drew my sketch in a few minutes and presented it to me expressing his personal good wishes and love for the Indian children.

They were all very keen to have something as a token from India. We had with us some picture postcards of the new Indian projects, which we presented to them. They also liked to exchange Indian coins with us for theirs. After everything else was exhausted, they wanted to have just our visiting cards. Anything would do, but they must have something from us — from India, as a memento and token of affection. They would not like just to take something from us without giving us something else in exchange. They gave us their postcards, their coins, their badges which were of many varieties. Two of them wanted to give away their fountain pens, and when we refused to take them, they felt sad. They were all of them overwhelmed, and full of affection for us.

The children were very keen to keep contact with India. Their interest was not transitory. Since returning to India I have received letters from some of them expressing their good wishes to the Indian children and desire to make friends with them. I am sure the other members of the Delegation must also have received similar letters from them.

The Young Pioneers have their own railways in five different places in the Soviet Union. Each of these railways has three to four stations situated at small distances. The trains, which are much smaller in size than the regular trains,

are completely manned and run by Young Pioneers. When we went to see the children's railway at Kiev we were received by Ivgani Kova, a boy of thirteen, the chief of the railway on duty. The railway line is four kilometers in length with three stations. It is like a regular railway in all respects. Every job like signalling, running the trains in time, changing the lines, managing the stations and keeping records is done by the children themselves. It helps a great deal in creating a sense of confidence among the young children that they can properly do any duty entrusted to them, even if the work is of great responsibility and is full of risks. Only in the engine section there is a senior man to help them in case of emergency. The children gave us a ride on their railway.

We were told that there are 24,000 Pioneer circles in the Ukraine Republic alone, with 600,000 members. There are 82 more camps in the suburbs of Kiev like the one we saw. The parents, we were told, pay 90 roubles per child which is roughly 30 per cent of the total expenditure. The rest is borne by the trade unions. Ten per cent of the total campers are admitted free.

There is apparently some inconsistency in the above informations given to us regarding the sharing of expenses incurred on the camps. It is probable that there are different types of camps run on different lines, but we could not get any exact details on this point.

But the great thing is that the whole movement is very impressive and interesting. I can say without hesitation that this is a very effective way of educating the younger generation. And after seeing the healthy, smiling, intelligent and youthful faces at the camps, we felt that the new generation

in the Soviet Union might grow into a more accommodating and friendly people. At the same time, we wondered about the propriety of having such a wonderful organisation completely under the control of the Komsomol, which again is controlled and dominated by one political party, namely, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Our democratic minds failed to grasp the propriety of giving the control of entire children's organisations financed from the Government's exchequer into the hands of a Party wing. This is a very important matter which can have serious repercussions in the years to come. It may either turn the whole Russian people into one-party-minded robots or else explode the one-party system. The future lies in the hands of the young, and I think from the way they are growing up that the future may have better prospects in store.

Meeting these young friends was, however, a great experience for all of us. Among the memorable events of our visit to the Soviet Union, meeting these children will always remain uppermost. We can never forget the affection of this innocent, charming young generation which is going to rule the Soviet Union in a few years to come. We were greatly touched by their affection. Our views about the Soviet children whom we met at the different camps can be summed up in the following few lines which we wrote in Hindi in the Visitors' Book at one of the camps, when we were asked to write something for the youngsters:- "Today, after seeing your Young Pioneers Camp, we, all the members of the Indian Youth Congress Delegation, have been immensely pleased. We shall never be able to forget the affectionate way in which the children have welcomed us.

"You have made beautiful arrangements for the children. You deserve our heartfelt congratulations. The children  
Y.R.-4.



are healthy, intelligent, happy and ever smiling. They are friendly and experts in hospitality. They behaved with us with great affection in a natural way and with self-confidence. We are carrying with us this boundless affection of theirs and after returning to our country we shall convey their affection to the children of our country.

“You love peace as dearly as your life. In that, may your children who belong to the new generation have complete success. These are our good wishes for all of you.”

## 4

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### THE KOMSOMOL

'KOMSOMOL' is the name of the Young Communist League of the Soviet Union. It is the only youth organisation in the country and is an enormous organisation. At a meeting we had with the Central Committee of the Komsomol, we were told that although it was a political organisation, it did not belong to the Communist Party. All the same, it was completely controlled and guided by the Party. It was rather difficult for us to understand this differentiation. We wondered how a political organisation could not be regarded as a party organisation when it was completely under its direct control.

The Komsomol was formed by the Communist Party forty years back. It has 18 million members at present. Its membership, however, is not open for all. As they put it, only those worthy of its membership were accepted into the fold. They did not clarify the point, but evidently it meant that before being admitted one would be properly screened, and accepted only if one was found to be a person who adjusted oneself to the Party line.

It was made clear to us that the main object of the Komsomol was to prepare young men for the work of the

Communist Party. The Komsomol's mottos are: "Love our country; become good youths; respect all the people of the USSR on the basis of equality without distinction of colour or race; imbibe the spirit of humaneness, friendship, helpfulness, collectivism, dignity of physical labour; and bring up the youth in a safe and sound way so that they become strong and brave."

The Komsomol works on the basis of 'democratic centralism', as they call it, which according to them is the best form of democracy. The organisation is supposed to run on the common will of the members. Members can express their views freely, and the activities of the Komsomol are formulated, on the basis of those views.

It has been decided by the latest Communist Party Congress that a general vote in the primary units should be assessed by show of hands and not by secret ballot as was done before. They believe that during elections at the primary committee level at least, the people should be allowed to express their opinions frankly and freely. This makes it obvious that freedom did not exist till now at the level of the primary units and it still does not exist at the subsequent stages.

Even though they say that every individual has a right to his own opinion and no five think alike, so far as Komsomolians are concerned they are all one on the following points:

- (i) Growth of Communism.
- (ii) Admission into their fold only of those who believe in Communism.
- (iii) Emphasis on increased production with the most up-to-date machinery.

- (iv) Helping workers by the aid of advancing science and technology.
- (v) Helping to build new plants, electric power stations, steel mills, atomic electric stations, coal mines, chemical industries, and to increase agricultural production, animal husbandry, etc.

For all these activities the Komsomol decided to make available the services of one million young men and women to the nation.

Mr. Misiasetsev, one of the top ten men of the Komsomol hierarchy, claimed that their system of education was better than that of any other country. He said that this was now being realised by the West. This system wanted their youth to be cultured besides being literate, he pointed out. They had taken up as one of their new programmes the organising of technical education for youth in high schools. They had also begun publishing new books and disseminating information through newspapers, radio, television and technical magazines on development of science, especially for and among the youth. They believed that their youth should be well versed in political education and strong in beliefs, and should know the theories of Marx and Lenin. Their energies were directed towards making the young people well equipped and ready to take over the reins of the Government when called upon to do so.

The new programme was chalked out by Mr. Khrushchev in his last speech to the Komsomol Congress. When we asked them why their main programme was chalked out by Mr. Khrushchev while they claimed that their programme depended upon the general will of their members, the reply was: "Of course, what we do depends upon the will of our members. but our members are aware that our leaders know

much more than we do and therefore we need their guidance. We believe that the programme chalked out by our leaders is the best for us. Therefore, we invite them to our Conference and are happy to take their guidance and advice. If their advice does not help to satisfy our requirements and aspirations, naturally these programmes will not become popular. We accept the guidance of our leaders because we are convinced that our leaders' views are the views of the Party." According to them it was necessary to abide by the Party line; otherwise the Party would disintegrate. They believed that Khrushchev in his address to the last Komsomol Congress had given expression to the correct aspirations of the youth.

On the 23rd June we met Mr. Firsop, the Second Secretary of the Komsomol of Leningrad. The membership of this Komsomol is about 3,80,000. They are divided into 5,000 groups. They have 47 districts in the region, 20 of these being in the city itself. They have employed 500 full-time paid workers for daily activities, whose main work is to educate the youth to be good workers by giving them proper political education as well as rest and recreation through cultural activities.

We were told that from among their members, 16,000 had gone to the Northern and Eastern regions for taking part in constructional work as volunteers, and 20,000 worked on the virgin lands elsewhere. Three million man-hours were spent in helping to build houses. A part of their summer vacation was spent on the collective farms.

We asked them what they meant by voluntary work and what were the conditions and remuneration for those who offered to do it. We were informed that the boarding and lodging expenses of these people were met by the State Komsomol, while the travelling expenses were met by each

station of management. The volunteers were expected to work eight hours a day and get paid for the work they did. If a volunteer was prepared to go out of station, he was paid one and a half times the usual wages. Sometimes they pooled the entire income and divided the net savings. Usually such camps were held for one month during the vacation which lasts for two months. In one such camp the participants received 2000 roubles each as emoluments, after all expenses were deducted. We asked them how they could call it voluntary labour when payment was made for the work. We further asked whether it was not a sort of compulsion when the volunteers were exhorted in the name of the country and especially when they were looked down upon if they did not respond. The reply was that previously they did not pay for such voluntary work; but now they had enough funds and could afford to pay, so why should they not pay? But all the same the work remained voluntary. However, they seemed ultimately to agree with our view that this was one of the devices by which they were trying to meet labour shortage.

Men and women were paid equal remuneration, but women were given comparatively lighter work. Among the Leningrad Komsomolians 2,000 are members of the Communist party. The budget for this Komsomol Committee runs into 9.3 million roubles.

Mr. Eric Pokrovsky, the First Secretary of the Crimean Komsomol, told us that they charge 20 kopeks (about 16 naye paise) as monthly fee from students and not more than one and a half per cent of their salary from working people. The membership of the Crimean Komsomol is one lakh. They collect waste metal scrap thrown on the roads and fields and sell it to the Government. Likewise they collect and sell old papers. A great park was built at Simferopol by

their efforts. The work was estimated to be worth one million roubles. The best worker was presented with 6,000 roubles by the local municipality. Such gifts can go to the worker himself or to the organisation. Sometimes the Komsomolians work overtime in their factories, say, each for one hour, and collect funds for the organisation. The total annual budget for the Crimean Komsomol is two million roubles. The average salary they pay to their workers is 600 to 700 roubles per month. Their main work for the next five years in Crimea is to grow more grapes for manufacturing wine. During this period they want to divert one-fifth of their total cultivated land for this purpose.

It looked a little unusual to us that these kinds of programmes, which are usually the responsibility of the Government, are taken up by the youth organisations as their main functions. We felt that these organisations were more like a Government set-up for something like a 'Grow more food campaign' than regular voluntary youth organisations.

*Structure:* The primary units of the Komsomol are formed at factories, mine pits, schools, collective farms, state farms, and machinery repair stations; in other words, at every place where the youths work or study. A minimum of three members is required for the formation and functioning of a primary unit. These units are combined together under an administrative district. In Moscow there are 22 such districts. In some of the primary units the membership is as much as 5000 and its committee is made of 3 to 15 members. At the district level the committee may have 40 to 120 members.

*Rights of Members:* The Komsomol recommends its members for local and central Government posts. The Central Council can actively interfere in the working of any

governmental body. They have a right to oppose those who are violating the Soviet laws.

We were told, as an example, that the Central Committee of Komsomol was not happy with a local Komsomol Committee for its failure to be strict with the head of one of the major hydro-electric stations who was a scientist, well-known throughout the country. He had not taken enough care regarding youth welfare, and the Central Komsomol had recommended action against him.

They claimed that every Russian youth was convinced that Communism was the best system and that, therefore, there was no difference of opinion among them on this point. Their country has risen out of poverty and become strong. Though every youth believed in Communism, they said, they selected only good youths for the Komsomol.

Although the fee collected from the members was nominal and a big income did not accrue from it, it was levied as a token of discipline within the organisation. The Komsomols have 40 magazines and 121 newspapers of their own in different local and foreign languages, from which they derive a big income.

The Communist Party keeps on recruiting within its own ranks good workers from the Komsomol. The Komsomol can therefore be said to be a Party reserve. There is no contest in elections between the Communist Party and the Komsomolians.

There is no doubt that the organisation is widespread, strong and powerful. But I wonder if it is fair to spend government funds for the benefit of the Party. Is this equation of the Party with the Government fair to the people?



Are the rights given to the Party to interfere with the working of the Governmental machinery reasonable? The Komsomol members try to boost the Party everywhere and on every occasion. When the Party needs such boosting, is it not an adverse reflection on its claims to popularity among the people at large? These are some of the doubts which assailed us.

# 5

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## MEETING WITH THE YOUTH LEADERS

WHEN WE arrived in the Soviet Union, Comrade Romanovsky, the President of the Committee of Soviet Youth Organisations, as well as Comrade Popov, the First Vice Chairman (whom we knew personally when he had come to India to attend the Youth Congress Convention), were away at Brussels. Comrade Popov was, in fact, responsible for inviting us to the Soviet Union. Therefore, we did not have any talks regarding organisational matters in the beginning. We had, however, two interviews with Comrade Shevchenko, one of the Vice Chairmen, but these were mainly regarding our itinerary in their country. An interview was therefore arranged with all of them on the morning of 3rd July on our return to Moscow after completing part of our tour.

Apart from Comrades Romanovsky, Popov and Shevchenko, Comrade Semichaski, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Komsomol, Comrade Murtzai, another Secretary of the Komsomol and a youth leader of Uzbekistan, and Comrades Nippomiset and Kesis, editor and a corresponding editor, respectively, of the *Komsomol Pravda*, were also present. Comrade Kesis has since come to India as a permanent resident correspondent for this paper.

After a very pleasant reception given to us by the President and the other youth leaders and formal introductions, we settled down to 'business'. Comrade Romanovsky started by saying: "We are very glad that you have been able to accept our invitation and come to our country. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all on behalf of our Committee and the youth of the U.S.S.R. The people of the U.S.S.R., specially its youth, love India and its people. There are many reasons for it, specially the cause of international peace in which both of our countries are vitally interested. We are happy that you have been able to go to a few places in our country and visit the youth organisations and meet their representatives. We would like to hear from you your impressions about all these. Will you mind telling us something about your impressions?" \*

*I said:* "We are indeed grateful to your Committee for the kind invitation and the great pains taken by your workers everywhere to organise our tour and to look after us so well. I would like to convey through you our personal gratitude and thanks to all the friends who have been kind enough to welcome us wherever we have gone. As far as our impressions are concerned it is very difficult to form definite opinions in such a short visit especially because of the language difficulty. But I shall try to tell you briefly what we felt on the whole.

"I can confidently say that the people and the young men and women of Russia have high regard for the Indian people. We were warmly received everywhere. At many places the receptions were spontaneous. At Kiev we were, as it were, mobbed by their love and 'killed' by their

\* The text of the talks reproduced here is based on the notes taken at the time by Shri Sat Pal Mittal, a member of our delegation.

affection. All this has overwhelmed us. We also found a very strong desire for peace in your people.

“During our tours we have specially tried to study your children’s and youth organisations. We made special efforts to know as much as we could and see how best we could benefit by your experience in organising our own youth movement when we return to our country.”

I told them about the favourable impressions we carried regarding the great care they were taking of their children through the Young Pioneers organisations as well as about our visits to the different centres of the Komsomol and our impressions about its being a strong and powerful organisation. I conveyed to them our happiness in being able to join in the first Youth Day of the U.S.S.R. in Kiev. The function was very impressive. We also liked the progress they were making and the facilities they were giving to their youths in the fields of physical education, sports and culture.

I referred to the tremendous progress they had made in the scientific and technological fields and the sufferings they had undergone for it. I pointed out that their people had been paying high prices for consumer goods and other daily necessities for a long time, and the problem was still not solved. They had not been able to give enough attention to the housing problem. Complimenting them on their having produced the Sputnik and hoping that it would be used only for peaceful purposes, I said: “If it is used for peaceful purposes, the sacrifice of your people will be treated as a great sacrifice made by you for the benefit of the whole world and mankind at large. If the Sputnik is used for the purposes of war your sacrifice will mean that it was only for your own country.”

I also told them how we were pleased to see the great

Moscow University, the Oriental Institutes, the underground railway, industrial and agricultural exhibitions, etc., about which any nation could be legitimately proud.

Although our ideologies were different and our approaches were also not the same, I said, we could work together in so many fields where we found areas of agreement. Since the people of both of our countries believed in universal peace we could direct our energies towards mobilising world opinion in favour of international peace.

*Romanovsky*: "I am happy to hear from you that the people of Moscow, Leningrad, Yalta and Kiev gave your delegation the right reception during your visit to these places. I am immensely happy to know your impressions, especially about the fact that the people of Russia want peace.

"I also feel that in spite of our differences in ideology and approach we have some things in common which bind us together.

"We may not accept each other's ideology nor force it upon one another and even then we can continue to strengthen our relations.

"The primary thing is not our differences but our common bonds and interests.

"Your trip to this country and our delegation's trip to India last year are concrete steps towards strengthening our relations. My friends are, therefore, anxious to know how this trip of your delegation will further our relations and pave the way for common activities."

*Bajaj*: "It is quite difficult to reach any definite conclusions without giving proper thought to it, which is only possible when we go back to our country and are able to

review the whole position coolly in the light of our experiences and after discussions with our friends and co-workers.

“As a matter of fact this is our first contact with your Committee. The coming here of observers from our country at the time of the Youth Festival was somewhat different. We have still to understand each other. It is, therefore, quite reasonable to continue our close contact to understand each other's activities. We can continue exchanging literature and correspondence.”

*Romanovsky:* “We have a very clear approach towards the Youth Movement of India and are conscious of the role being played by the Youth Congress in the reconstruction of India. We clearly understand our differences, but it is our duty to attach more importance to our common interests. Both our countries and the youth organisations want peace and friendship in the world. We want to make the future society more happy and prosperous. These are the common things on which we can base our activities. These are the things which can bring us nearer and closer.

“The Russian people had always extended their moral support and co-operation in the cause of India's struggle for independence.

“The visit of Shri Jawaharlal Nehru to the U.S.S.R. and our Government delegation to India have immensely improved our relations in the recent past. Our trade and cultural relations have also strengthened a great deal. This friendship will go a long way in promoting the cause of world peace.

“We agree to exchange correspondence, books, magazines, reports and other literature. We would expect your co-operation with Comrade Kesis, representative of the

*Pravda*, who is going to Delhi very soon. We wish to exchange photographic exhibitions of our respective youth organisations. Our experience of the exchange of youth delegations has proved useful. This can be continued. We can exchange another youth delegation next year. It is also desirable in view of the vastness of our countries that instead of going round the country geographically, we can in future specify the special purpose of study of various youth activities for our delegations. We may even start direct correspondence at district levels. It has been necessitated to make this request, because of the continuous pressure of our subordinate committees on us to make it convenient for them. During my visit to India I met a number of Youth Congress organisers. I found them quite efficient and impressive. It had struck me even then to have the permission of your organisation to start direct correspondence with them.

“We are going to organise a number of Seminars this year, prominent among them being as under:

1. Seminar on peaceful use of science.
2. Seminar on Russian students learning languages.
3. Seminar on students' architecture.

“We are also going to have international children's and youth labour camps in the current year.

“We invite a delegation of your organisation on all these occasions.

“We have started a new activity in order to encourage student tourism. We have opened a Students' Tourist Bureau under our Committee for this purpose. It will work on a non-exchange of currency basis. By this arrangement groups of students and youths visiting Russia from various countries will have to bear the expenses of the groups going from

Russia to their respective countries as we bear theirs here. The respective parties can pay their travelling expenses in their own currencies, and hence there will be no foreign exchange involved. This scheme will enable our youth to establish close contacts with the youth of other countries and to study their problems and activities and *vice versa*. We are ready to receive hundreds of such groups in our country and send the same number from here.

"These are concrete proposals which can be discussed in detail."

*Bajaj:* "I am happy that certain concrete proposals have been made by you and the draft programmes of the seminars have also been supplied to us. We appreciate these proposals and hope that they will be to our mutual benefit.

"I may, however, be permitted to mention some of our limitations, which may come in the way of our implementing certain projects although we may very much like to see them done. Our inability to implement any proposals should not be taken to mean that we are necessarily against them. Often we cannot do many things because of lack of workers and funds. I hope you and your other friends will not misunderstand us and will try to see things in the right perspective. Ours is an infant youth organisation which came into being only five or six years ago. We have very meagre resources. Ours is a different system and our youth movement has a different structure. Our membership too is not very large. We do not get any help from the Government directly or indirectly."

*Romanovsky* intervened: "But Youth Congress wields a good deal of influence in India."

*Bajaj:* "You are right, Com. Chairman. I never said that it does not have influence. I was not referring to its Y.R.-5.



influence on students and youth and the people of India. It certainly has a good deal of it. I was referring to the size, membership and resources at the disposal of the organisation. As we do not get any help from the Government we depend completely on the goodwill of our workers whose services are mainly voluntary. As a matter of fact, our main resource of strength is the goodwill of our youth and people who like to help us in a spontaneous way. If we have resources we can build the membership in millions without much difficulty. Therefore, our influence does not depend upon membership but the service we do for the young men."

*Romanovsky:* "We too have financial difficulties but would very much like to exchange at least one delegation next year."

I continued, in a humorous vein: "I am neither Romanovsky nor the Chairman of the Youth Congress in India. I will gladly report to my organisation about all the suggestions and proposals put forward by you and the proper and definite answers can be given only after fuller consideration by our organisation. I hope you will understand my position in this regard."

*Romanovsky:* "I quite appreciate it. I am in agreement with you. Even if our delegation in India was confronted with such questions and proposals, our reply to you would have been the same. This is an international diplomatic answer."

*Bajaj:* "With your permission, Mr. Chairman, I would like to discuss in brief something regarding the World Assembly of Youth."

*Romanovsky:* "Yes — with great pleasure." [At this

stage he conveyed to us in a formal way about our meeting with Mr. Khrushchev at 3 p.m. the same afternoon.]

*Bajaj:* "We are indeed grateful for this kind gesture on the part of your Prime Minister. I would like to know if we have to observe any protocol courtesies when we meet your Prime Minister, and whether it is desirable that our Ambassador should accompany us. Our members desire to know if it is possible to have a photograph taken of our delegation with your Prime Minister."

*Romanovsky:* "Comrade Khrushchev has intimated us that he would receive your delegation at 3 p.m. today. There is no mention of any protocol, etc. As regards the photograph, although the request will have to be made to Comrade Khrushchev directly, yet I think it is possible."

*Bajaj:* "With your permission, Mr. Romanovsky, may I now open our discussion on the World Assembly of Youth? I have to convey to you, as Chairman of the WAY Committee in India, where the International General Assembly will be meeting this August, that at the initiative of the India Committee a resolution has been passed by the International Executive of WAY extending to your Committee an invitation to participate in its Assembly as observers. I know I cannot expect an immediate reply to this invitation. I would very much desire that it should be favourably considered by your Committee and the decision may be intimated to us as soon as it is taken."

*Romanovsky:* "We have received the invitation from the WAY Committee, along with the resolution. We have also discussed it in our Committee and taken a decision. We have always been ready to co-operate with the WAY. We have been writing to its Chairman and Secretary to find

out the possibility of undertaking some common programme. In 1956, we invited both of them to tour our country to study our activities and explore possibilities of some common activities. They did not respond to our invitation. I met the President of WAY International, Mr. Lawrence, in London and requested him again, but he declined on some vague excuse. I also put some concrete proposals to them, on behalf of my Committee, but there was no response. This all indicates that they do not want to maintain any contact with us.

“Even if anti-Soviet propaganda is being carried on in the WAY publications we have been ready to come to some understanding with them, but the result you know. In the face of all this, our Committee has decided not to participate in the Assembly. You and other friends from India must not misunderstand our position. We are grateful to you for your initiative in getting us invited to the Assembly, but the reasons of our non-participation are obviously known. This should, therefore, not be taken as a disregard of your initiative and efforts. We hope our refusal will not affect our relations.

“We think that it is very necessary that some preliminary discussions are held before we go to participate in their assemblies and conferences. It is also not advisable to go as observers. We shall continue looking for steps towards some common programme. We shall not block the way of discussion and negotiation, on our side. We are, therefore, still ready to receive the President and Secretary of the WAY here for discussion on this subject.”

*Bajaj.* “I understand your position and also appreciate your frankness, Mr. Chairman. I was in duty bound to

convey our wishes to you, on behalf of my Committee and on my own behalf too. I am happy that I have done my duty."\*

The meeting lasted for about three hours. It was extremely interesting and very educative. All their top leaders were present. In accordance with their practice, the Chairman, Comrade Romanovsky, spoke from their side and I spoke on our side as the leader of the delegation. Comrade Romanovsky spoke in Russian. I should have liked to speak in Hindi, but had to speak in English because the interpreter did not know Hindi. During the discussions none else spoke or interfered. That was a very good experience in a way. Romanovsky himself was different from the normal Communist who generally talks in a matter-of-fact way. He was very polite, gentle and charming. He had a very soft accent and pleasing manners. I felt happy to have made his acquaintance.

When we went for this meeting I naturally had some misgivings, because none of us had experience of carrying on talks at such a level with people who were very proficient in this line. Each one of them was heading an organisation which had membership of millions and budgets running into crores. Most of them had led delegations to different countries and carried on diplomatic talks, whereas this was the

\* In order to avoid any misunderstanding regarding the position of WAY, I must mention that Com. Romanovsky's version gives only one side of the picture. As this was not a proper occasion for us to enter into any controversy with him, I left it at that. The main stumbling block against effective co-operation between the WAY and Communist youth organisations has been the unhelpful attitude adopted by the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY), to which they are affiliated. Several approaches made by the WAY to the WFDY in the past had ended in failure because of this. The WAY has still been persisting in its efforts to find some common ground for co-operation, and it is to be hoped that they will bear fruit some time before long.

first time any of us, with the exception of myself, had made a trip abroad. But after the meeting was over our Russian friends felt happy over the general trend and the high standard of the discussions. The members of our delegation were also happy and satisfied that on the whole we had given a good account of ourselves and during the discussions nothing was said which was not in keeping with our dignity. This was made possible by the frequent consultations and mutual confidence between the members of the delegation who worked as a team. This was naturally a matter of great satisfaction to me personally.

One of our Russian friends who was present at the meeting and knew English congratulated us afterwards on the good impression we had made on the leaders of the youth organisations. He had visited India and liked our country. He said that they all knew that Comrade Romanovsky was a great and experienced man in this kind of meetings; all the same the standard of talk was on an equal level from both sides.

## 6

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### MEETING WITH KHRUSHCHEV

**DURING DISCUSSIONS** with the representatives of the Soviet Youth Committee, we suggested among other things that, if possible, we would like to meet Prime Minister Khrushchev and other leaders. They laughed the suggestion out and told us that they would like to do anything for us but were unable to comply with this request, since it was almost an impossible one. We reminded them that when their representatives had been in India, we had arranged their meeting with our Prime Minister and hence it would be in the fitness of things if they could also arrange for our meeting with their top leaders. They appreciated our remarks, but said: "You see, this is not India, this is Russia." They pointed out that the members of the Russian Government do not meet people easily. It is not common even for an official government delegation from abroad to meet the Russian leaders. They said, "Yours is a non-official delegation and that too a youth delegation. Therefore, it is impossible for us to do anything in the matter. However, as you have made the request we shall pass it on to the Prime Minister's office for their consideration."

We had lost all hope of meeting their Prime Minister,

and we left Moscow on a tour of different parts of the country according to the programme drawn up for us.

After about two weeks' tour we were in Kiev. One fine morning one of the interpreters who had accompanied us from Moscow representing the Youth Committee told us, all of a sudden, that his Committee wanted to know why we desired to meet the leaders of the Soviet Government. Did we have any specific problems to discuss with them? We told him that there was nothing particular that we wanted to discuss with the Soviet leaders, but we would just like to pay a courtesy call on them in order to convey our grateful thanks personally for the kind reception the Soviet people had given us. He seemed to be satisfied. He then managed our programme in Kiev in such a way that it was finished a day earlier. He did not give us any indication but asked us whether we would not prefer to return to Moscow a day earlier than the scheduled date since there was nothing much left to see in Kiev ! He suggested that all the important engagements which were still left could be covered a day earlier. That would give us a day more in Moscow to discuss things of mutual interest with the leaders of the Youth Committee. The way he put the suggestion to us practically left us no choice, but we did not mind the change in programme because that would give us an extra day in Moscow. We had a vague feeling that there was something deeper than was evident on the surface, but we could not guess what was to follow.

After reaching Moscow we were taken for our scheduled discussion with the leaders of the Soviet Youth Committee. When we were about to leave, the pleasant news was broken to us by Comrade Romanovsky that we would be seeing the Prime Minister the same afternoon at 3 o'clock. He would

come to fetch us exactly at 2-30 p.m. and by then we should be ready. He was very particular that we were not to be late even by a minute !

At 2.45 sharp our cars reached the Kremlin. We were led to the first floor. Besides Comrade Romanovsky, Comrade Semichaski, the First Secretary of the Young Communist League, also joined us while we were waiting in a small room next to the office of the Prime Minister.

At exactly one minute past 3 o'clock, we were asked to go in for the interview. Quite excited, we went in to keep one of the most important engagements during our visit to the Soviet Union. We were about to meet the most powerful man in present-day Russia — a man who was ruling over practically half the world and in whose hands and on whose wishes depended the destiny of mankind.

The doors were opened for us and, as leader of the delegation, I was the first to step in. The others followed. The room was long, and the table at which the Prime Minister sits and works was at the other end of it. Even before we got into the room, our host had got up from the chair and walked quite a few steps towards the entrance, and was standing there all alone by himself to receive us. As soon as we entered he greeted us from a distance with not only folded hands but uttering '*Namaste*' with a smile on his face. We were pleasantly surprised at the warm welcome. While he shook hands with each of us we were introduced to him by our interpreter Misha who had become a close friend of ours during the tour. After the introductions Manubhai Patel presented a "Gandhi cap" to Mr. Khrushchev which he accepted with a pleasant gesture and himself put the cap on. The cap adorned his head throughout the



time we were with him. Luckily, the cap was exactly to his size as if made to measure, and it suited him well. He looked very charming in it.

Mr. Khrushchev himself suggested, "Why not we pose for a photograph?" We were again happy to note the gesture of friendship. As a matter of fact, as suggested by the Youth Committee leaders earlier we wanted to make a request to Mr. Khrushchev personally for a photograph and had requested them to keep a photographer ready at hand. Therefore, we were naturally pleased when the suggestion for the photograph came from the host himself. Many cameramen including a film unit were already there before we were ushered in and had taken position to take the film and photographs. Except for the photographers there was nobody else with Mr. Khrushchev, and immediately after the photographs were taken, all of them quietly left the room.

Mr. Khrushchev then guided us to a long table specially meant for meetings and conferences which was on one side of the room parallel to the long wall. The table was T-shaped. I naturally thought that he would occupy the chair which was at the head of the table. But no. He signalled to Misha, our interpreter, to take that seat and sat opposite to me giving us, so to say, an equal status with himself to make the visit friendly and informal. It was a fine gesture which we appreciated very much.

We were also glad that instead of having an official interpreter they had asked Misha to translate the talks, and that too not from English but from Hindi. It was a great day for our friend Misha because, I think, this was the first time

he had an occasion to meet his Prime Minister and to act as *his* interpreter. And we were all the more glad for this.

We expected that Mr. Khrushchev would say a few words welcoming us, and then, as was earlier fixed by the Youth Committee, we would say a few words of thanks for the courtesy shown to us, and that would be the end of the meeting. But things turned out to be pleasantly different. After saying a few words welcoming us to the Soviet Union, he said that he would be glad to hear about our impressions of the tour. Then he himself offered that we should ask him any questions we liked and that he would willingly answer them. This, indeed, came to us as a pleasant surprise.

As a matter of fact, we were not at all prepared for this and, therefore, had not given any prior thought to the questions we would have liked to ask him. But as he offered to answer our questions we thought of making the best use of the opportunity. I took care that the questions were of general interest and not of a controversial or embarrassing nature.

Before starting the questions, I told him about the delegation's general impressions of Russia. We were overwhelmed by the hearty welcome given by the Soviet people wherever we went. We were particularly impressed by the work being done by the Young Pioneers. We had found the Kom-somol to be a very powerful youth organization and we were thankful to the Russian people for their kindness towards us and for their generous hospitality, and grateful to the Soviet Committee for Youth Organisations. When we went back to our country we would be happy to tell our young people about our impressions of our visit to Russia.

Then followed our questions and Mr. Khrushchev's answers, which are recounted below.\*

*Bajaj:* Would you like to convey any message to the youth of India?

*Khrushchev:* The first thing I would like to convey to the young people of India would be that they must achieve high standards of living. I want them to study hard, so that they can become good workers in their later life. As you know life never stands still but moves forward. Therefore, I want them to work on a higher level. In our days the development of technology is taking place at a rapid speed. I know that the youth of India love their motherland and are working for its development and reconstruction. I want them to work better and be worthy of their forefathers. I want the friendship between the Indian and the Soviet youth to grow into stronger bonds. Mankind should be able to prevail over the evil forces of destruction and war and assure a higher standard of living for all. If everybody works hard there will be enough material resources for a higher standard of living for everybody on this earth. So convey this message of mine to your youth.

[I thanked him for his kind good wishes for the Indian youth and assured him that we would convey the same to them.]

*Bajaj:* I had the opportunity to meet you and attend some of your meetings during your visit to India. May we know why you liked our country so much?

\* As we had not taken down any notes during the interview, I have largely depended on the report which appeared in *News and Views from the Soviet Union*, dated July 12, 1958, published from Delhi by the Information Department of the U.S.S.R. Embassy in India.

**Khrushchev:** Indeed the Soviet people like India. We all love your country. Our sympathies for your people are due to the fact that they have suffered for a long time under colonial rule. We are happy you have become free now and are able to develop your resources for the benefit of your people. In the international field also you want to live in peace with all nations on the basis of Panchsheel, the principles which the Soviet people also appreciate.

**Bajaj:** Could you tell us, Sir, under the present circumstances what is the most important thing to be done for preserving peace in the world?

**Khrushchev:** The most important thing for the strengthening of peace is to explain to the people what they must do to strengthen and safeguard peace. The forces of war are trying by means of a powerful propaganda machine to spread their ideas. We must expose the moves of the enemies of peace. We must organise for preserving peace. We must advocate the principles of Panchsheel everywhere.

Mr. Khrushchev then started talking about the U.S.A. and how its aggressive monopoly circles are forcing the world towards war. He then referred to the happenings in Gautemala, some of the Latin American countries and Lebanon. He also said that as regards the Kashmir question, America was in the wrong. "Why should America give better treatment to Pakistan than to India?" he asked. His delegation had personally visited Kashmir and they were convinced that the present Bakhshi Government is doing very good work in the interest of the people of Kashmir. He asked me to convey to Bakhshi Ghulam Mohammed, whenever I met him, his gratitude for the hospitality accorded to them during their tour of Kashmir. He said that as regards Kashmir, India's stand was correct and the attitude taken by

the U.S.A., due to Pakistan being a member of the Baghdad Pact and SEATO was wrong. He further said that India is pursuing an independent foreign policy and refusing to join any aggressive military alignment. That is just the reason why the U.S.S.R. loved India and the U.S.A. did not.

*Bajaj:* Please excuse us for taking so much of your time, but could I ask you one more question?

*Khrushchev:* Don't worry. You come from very far. Of course, because of jet planes we can now have breakfast in Moscow, lunch in Delhi and supper in Moscow again, bringing India nearer to us. The people of India are large-hearted and, therefore, it would be my pleasure if we continue talking.

Thirty-five minutes had already passed. I thought it was not proper for us to take any more of his time and take advantage of the good gesture and hospitality shown to us.

I put him the last question: "Would you like us to convey anything on your behalf to our Prime Minister when we meet him?"

Mr. Khrushchev replied: "It is with great pleasure that I would like to convey to your Prime Minister my sincere wishes for his good health and long life. If he has them, he will certainly carry on the good work he is doing. These are my most sincere wishes to him."

After the conversation was over, all the members of our delegation were keen to have the autographs of Mr. Khrushchev. He readily obliged.

In the end, I thanked Mr. Khrushchev not only on behalf of the delegation but also on behalf of the younger generation of our country for his solicitude for our well-being and good wishes for our future. I promised him that

after our return to our country we would convey his good wishes to our brethren.

We then presented to him a replica of the Ashoka Pillar made of ivory, as a memento of our visit and as an appreciation of the gesture he had shown us by going out of his way to break all the previous conventions in granting us the interview.

I also told him before leaving that I would be sending him later from India some books on the youth movement and also a book entitled *To a Gandhian Capitalist* containing correspondence between Mahatma Gandhi and my father. I told him why I was particularly interested to send him this book. Although much has been said and written about Gandhiji's political and other public activities, not much was known about the human aspect of his life, the keen interest which he took in guiding the personal lives of individuals who sought his advice in the midst of all his multifarious public activities. I sent him a copy of the book on my return to India.

The memorable interview of nearly forty minutes thus ended on a happy note and mutual exchange of thanks and good wishes. We had met one of the most important men in the contemporary history of the world, and we are bound to remember the event during the rest of our lives.

We were greatly impressed by the friendly manner in which Mr. Khrushchev received us and the readiness he showed in answering our questions. He was quite at ease and not at all in a hurry. He did not show as if he was pre-occupied with business of State. He talked in intimate terms with a chuckle in his eyes at times. He seemed to have a keen sense of humour and laughed heartily whenever an occasion arose. All this impressed us. The only harsh note

was his uncalled for denunciation of the policies of the U.S.A., which had no relation to any of our questions. It looked as if he went a little out of his way to say all those things in very strong terms even though our questions had not called for these remarks.

This interview was flashed all over the world by Tass. The photographs and films which had been taken on the occasion were released widely. That confirmed the belief of some of our colleagues that Mr. Khrushchev wanted to use this interview to say something which was going on in his mind.

As, according to us, it was a courtesy interview I had instructed our delegates not to take any notes of the talks since it might not be in good form to do so. But from what followed I was sorry at the end for having been left without any notes of the interview. Before departing, however, I asked Mr. Khrushchev for his permission to publish the interview which he readily gave. It was, therefore, all the more necessary that we had a regular and authentic report with us. Under the circumstances we had to depend upon our hosts and request them if they could supply us with an official version of the interview. As two members from Mr. Khrushchev's staff who had joined us when the talks started had taken exhaustive notes there should have been no difficulty for them to comply with our request.

Since we were returning to India soon after, I requested them if I could get the report immediately. But it was delayed. After two or three days I pressed them that I must have the official version with me before I left, so that in case I met our Prime Minister I could give him a copy of it. Then they told me that they were trying to get the official text as soon as possible, but it could not be given before

Mr. Khrushchev himself had seen and approved it. At that time he had gone to Leningrad along with the President of Czechoslovakia, and the report had to be sent to him there for his approval.

Ours was not an official delegation, nor was the discussion that took place between us of a very important nature. It was neither controversial nor of much diplomatic importance. Hence, anybody from his senior staff should have been able to release the gist of the interview on his behalf. But that did not happen. That is not their way. Even simple and innocent things — matters of minor importance — will not see the light of the day unless they are approved by the leaders themselves. I think we in India can take a lesson from this. It is always good in the long run to be precise on such occasions, specially when dealing with foreigners. When there is material which will appear in the newspapers and receive wide publicity, it is always better that the persons concerned scrutinise it beforehand and satisfy themselves about its authenticity. If it is left to others, they may put it with a little different emphasis here or there. This can lead to unnecessary complications and misunderstandings at times. The news that comes first always gets the big headlines, and few people would bother about a contradiction if it is published at a later date. It is difficult to mitigate the damage already done.

The Tass News Agency immediately flashed the interview all over the world. It appeared in some of the Indian newspapers with the headlines: "Russia, not U.S., loves India."



# 7

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## FIRST YOUTH DAY

THE YOUNG Communist League of the Soviet Union (Komsomol) had proposed that the 29th of June should be celebrated as Youth Day throughout the country, and the Russian Government had accepted the proposal. This day has no historical or any other significance. June is a month of holidays for schools, and has bright weather. This is the last holiday in the month.

This was the first of their Youth Day celebrations in the country and we were very happy to have had an opportunity to participate in them at Kiev, among all other places.

We arrived in Kiev on the 28th evening and were taken to a Cinerama show (Panorama, as they call it). It was a fine film showing some of the places of historical and economic importance in the country. We were particularly interested to see the scenes of the last Youth Festival held in Moscow.

The Youth Day started with a little drizzle in the morning, but the sky cleared soon and the weather was as sunny as could be. In the morning we were taken round the city which has a population of nearly 12 lakhs. Kiev is

neat, clean and well planned. During the war it was — like the rest of the Ukraine — under the occupation of the Germans. The major portion of the city, especially the central parts, had been almost totally devastated and had been rebuilt.

In the morning different batches of youth offered their homage by placing wreaths ceremonially on different tombs of their war heroes, known and unknown. The city is full of such memorials.

The main programme started at 4.30 in the afternoon. We were all taken to the Khrushchev Stadium which has a seating capacity of nearly 75,000. It is made in the same style as Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Stadium in Bombay. The whole Stadium was decorated with flags and banners, with a large portrait of Lenin in the centre. Nine other big portraits of leaders of the Central Government were also placed on both sides, starting with those of Voroshilov and Khrushchev; Bulganin's was also there at one end.

When we reached the Stadium it was very sunny and hot, and not many people were present; but within 30 to 40 minutes the Stadium was full to capacity. The whole show was being organised by the Komsomol, and the function began with a short opening speech by the local Komsomol secretary.

A big parade started with Lenin's portrait on a large banner, followed by a wreath for the dead heroes, people in old-style costumes representing the previous generations, the Army, the Navy, virgin soil reclamation squads, children, women, sportsmen, and so on, in turn. The grand march-past was over. The whole arena was almost full with colour and gaiety, with flags and banners. This was followed by many sports, competitions and races. Races were also

organised for children of the age group of 8 to 10. Unmindful of the huge crowd, these children did their part without any hesitation or nervousness. Then followed some ballet items. The lotus dance was good, but a dance given by small children was superb.

Then came a push-ball match, which was a new game for us as well as for the people there. It is played with a very huge rubber ball, more for amusing the crowd than for the play itself. The function ended with a football match. The whole programme was impressive being well organised and neatly executed, looking to the fact that it was being celebrated for the first time.

We were then taken to a park where the Youth Committee had arranged a meeting. A crowd of about 5,000 was present. We were all directed on to the stage and received with a great ovation. A young film actress presided. An old lady, one of the oldest members of the Communist Party of Kiev, spoke first, followed by a heroine of the Young Mothers. A young woman giving birth to a large number of children and bringing them up well is considered to be such a heroine.

Thereafter we were asked to say a few words. As we were given only three minutes I had to be very brief. I only said in Hindi: "We come from India, the land of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. We bring good wishes to your youth from our organisation, the Youth Congress. Our leaders have always taught us to work for peace. We are glad that the Russian youth also want peace. We should both work for the cause of peace together. Long live the friendship between the youth of the Soviet Union and India." It was very well received by the gathering. After each sentence was translated there were deafening cheers

from the entire gathering. We could sense that the cheering was spontaneous, and came from within their hearts.

We then presented to them a beautiful bronze-and silver plate with the figure of Shiva in the 'tandava' pose, the handiwork of our artisans, which they appreciated very much. They in turn presented us all with flowers and long bread, specially made for such occasions. They said it was customary to offer these things to their guests. We were pleasantly surprised to see the similarity of their customs with ours — respect for flowers and bread, beauty and utility — the same sentiments with the same symbols!

We then sang in chorus the well-known song "Kadam kadam badhaye ja", well led by Pratima Mukerji, our delegate from Calcutta. Our Russian friend and Hindi interpreter Misha also joined in the singing, wearing a Gandhi cap. The song was greeted with loud and long cheers. We had to sing another song — Kachyusha — a very popular Russian song. Pratima, who had learnt this song, led the chorus, which again the people greeted with prolonged cheers. Time was running short, but because of the insistence of the crowd the chairman had to ask Pratima to sing a Hindi and a Bengali song. The three minutes allotted to us lengthened out into thirty! It was a very happy experience. The affection of the people was boundless and beyond imagination.

We then walked to the riverside. The river was floodlit and many decorated boats passed by, cheered by the crowds standing on the banks. The whole city was in a festive mood and everybody seemed to be out on the roads. The streets were full of crowds, and every place of vantage was occupied by the citizens. There was not an inch of space left. In the end came the marvellous illuminations from the other side of the river. It was all a grand sight.

It was 11.30 and time to return to the hotel. During all this period scores and scores of people surrounded each one of us and wanted to talk to us. They were impelled by curiosity as well as affection. They were, so to say, dying to have a look at us and a hand-shake and if possible exchange of greetings. Many would just come to say, "Hindi Rusi bhai bhai," and then go away.

The children were mad with joy, and so were the women. Pratima and our Puransingh Azad, the Sardar in turban, were a great draw. It became almost impossible to walk on our way back. People clung to us and we could only move forward inch by inch. Children would hold our hands and would not let us go. We never had an experience of being mobbed like this before. Of course, we had mobbed our beloved leaders so many times, but then we were the mobs. This time it was we who were being mobbed, and that too by foreigners in their own land. Oh! what an exhilarating experience!

Our guides became panicky. They took each of us by the arm and almost dragged us away from the crowds. They were nervous lest something untoward should happen to their guests — guests from India and members of a delegation. What an expression of relief we saw on the faces of these friends when we came to a side-street free of crowds! But I was enjoying the fun and so were the other members.

Later, I asked them why they were so much upset and nervous. For us it had been wonderful to be with the crowds, to rub shoulders with them. That was a real experience. We had enjoyed the day immensely, and it was a grand climax to a perfect youth day. But they said we were their honoured guests and having had to walk all the distance we were put to so much trouble and risk. It was not proper for the local

organisers not to have visualised the great crowds and the mobbing. They should have taken suitable precautions beforehand to prevent this.

They could not fully understand our joy and elation at this spontaneous expression of love and affection towards us. If we had missed this, we would have missed an experience which probably would never be repeated in life. It is not possible that this spontaneous mass reaction could have been preplanned. But at the same time we could not help feeling that the people had been trained to react in a particular way to certain events and in certain circumstances.

It was a physically tiring day but otherwise we were very happy. After some time the intoxication of self-importance generated by the mob-worship started subsiding and I started thinking. Who were we after all? What had we done to deserve all this affection? We were small people. Our contribution was insignificant. Yet we were important ! For we were representatives of India, the country of our saints and Mahatma Gandhi; the country whose leader today was our beloved Jawaharlal Nehru, respected all over the world; the country which had always believed in peace and love. The people were honouring us not as individuals but as representatives of a great nation. We were overwhelmed. What a great thing it is to represent a great nation in a great country !

I enquired why it was that India and the Indian people were so popular with the Russian people. Several reasons have jointly contributed to this popularity. Pandit Nehru's visit to the U.S.S.R. was one of the prime factors. He had charmed everybody. They are madly in love with him. The warm welcome extended by the Indian people to their leaders Khrushchev and Bulganin when they visited India was also highly appreciated by the Russians. For the last

five or six years the Russian Press has been continuously giving coverage to news about India in a very sympathetic manner. The Russian people are keen to have peace, and they are convinced that India too genuinely wants peace and is striving for it. They have sympathy and admiration for India which has only recently become independent from foreign rule after a protracted struggle.

As a matter of fact, they like and love all the peoples of Asian and African countries. But their greatest love is for the Chinese people; Indians come next.

## 8

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### **A FOOTBALL MATCH IN "WHITE NIGHT"**

**WE WERE** in Leningrad on the 23rd June which is the longest day of the year. On that day, in those latitudes, there is practically no night. The sun remains above the horizon for nearly twenty hours and for the rest of the time before the next dawn there is enough twilight to enable one to read in the open without the aid of lights. The street lights are not lit at all during this part of the year called "days of white 'nights".

During this time matches are also played till late in the evening without the aid of artificial lights. When we reached the large sports-stadium at Leningrad to see a football match it was 7.30 in the evening. The match went on till about 9.30 but it was almost like 5.00 p.m. in Bombay. It was an interesting experience by itself.

The stadium has an over-all seating capacity of 85,000. It is not, however, covered from the top like the Brabourne Stadium in Bombay. The match we saw was between two local teams; yet it aroused tremendous interest. When we reached the stadium about 60,000 people were present.

Sports activities in general are on the increase in the Soviet Union. Football occupies the pride of place among



all the sports. Tennis is also very popular. During our stay there, international football tournaments were going on in Sweden, and the younger generation in Russia was found quite excited about it and eager to hear minute-to-minute news about how the teams were faring. The Russians expected their team to win the tournament or at least reach the finals. There was great disappointment when it lost 1-3 to England.

We were slightly late and Sania Satekova, one of our chief hosts, was rushing me down in a car to the stadium. Cars were not generally allowed near the stadium entrance. The police as usual stopped us. But Sania spoke to the policeman and showed some paper, and we were allowed to pass. At the main entrance also she did the same thing and we were allowed to get in without buying tickets. We were shown in to the best enclosure, one which was reserved for distinguished guests. A sign or word was enough to suggest that we were guests from India and members of a visiting delegation. It appeared that at all such places it was usual to accord special treatment to guests and delegations from outside, and special seats were always reserved for them. It has become part of the national custom, and nowadays there is a continuous flow of delegations from different countries.

The match was between Zenet Blues and Admiraltyats. The Zenets had always been in the A group of teams whereas Admiraltyats had been recently promoted from B to A category and were playing for the first time against an A team. That probably was the reason for the special interest and so much excitement. The people, specially the youngsters, were supporters of the up-and-coming team.

The first goal was scored by the Admiraltyats; and what a spate of clapping and excitement there was ! Though

the senior team was playing better the Admiraltyats seemed to have more luck. The new team lost many advantageous chances as they were playing with some nervousness and a lack of self-confidence. Like new-comers to the field and inexperienced players, some of them kicked the ball from long distances directly at the goal instead of passing it. This naturally annoyed the better players among them. They were also at times playing rough and the referee had to warn one of their players. He, however, accepted the warning in a sporting and disciplined manner.

The game was not of a very high order; but it was interesting all the same because of the excitement. Sania was a volley ball player and had been a champion of her club; hence she was taking keen interest in the game. As she was from the very beginning a supporter of the Admiraltyats, she was full of excitement when they scored the first goal.

Matches are played for one and a half hours with a fifteen minutes' interval. Just 10 minutes before the end the Admiraltyats scored again (2-0). Soon after, the Zenets got a penalty in their favour and they scored (2-1). That was the final score. During the game one player got injured and retired. He was replaced by another. I was later told that even in tournaments the players are allowed to be substituted in such circumstances, though it is not allowed for international matches.

Just before the game started a 50-strong band played for about a minute or two. The band did not play during the interval as in India.

The whole show was organised and managed by the Komsomol. The First Secretary of the Leningrad Komsomol himself made the announcements in the beginning and

moved about the field with two of his lieutenants with great gusto.

At the very outset he announced the decision of his committee that there would be lotteries at the end of the game. Obviously, it was the first time that a lottery was introduced and that might have been partly responsible for such a large attendance. There were some twelve prizes in the lottery, many of them inexpensive articles like dresses for football players. Two scooters were also offered. All the same, people were very keenly interested in the lottery. The procedure, however, was very slow-moving and it took about 45 minutes to complete the drawing of lots. There was plenty of humour and joking about besides keen enthusiasm. None appeared to mind the slowness of the proceedings, but on the contrary everyone enjoyed it. Though the articles offered were not of great value, everyone seemed to be eager to win a prize. We got tired in the end and left the arena some time before the show was over.

We saw another thrilling football match at the Lenin Stadium in Moscow between a visiting French team and a local Moscow team. They were not official teams but the interest was tremendous probably because not many foreign teams came to the Soviet Union.

As I have said already, sports activities are on the increase in the Soviet Union and stadia are coming up in all the big cities, including Kiev and Tashkent. The Stadium in Moscow, named after Lenin, is a huge affair and an institution in itself. We were taken round by Mr. Napasnikov, its Director-General. It has 73 rows arranged in amphitheatre style with seating capacity for more than a lakh of people. An interesting feature is that it takes only about seven minutes for the whole gathering to disperse through

the numerous exists. We were told that the total cost of the Stadium was nearly 450 million roubles.

Along with the main stadium there is a children's stadium reserved for the age group of 7 to 17. About 2,500 children are given athletic training here every day. There is also a covered stadium called the Palace of Sports with a seating capacity of 17,000. Boxing matches, concerts, operas, etc. are staged here. There is a swimming pool nearby with a seating capacity of 13,200. Nearly 1,500 people come for swimming every day.

There is also a Sports Museum at the stadium where we were shown a short film on the last Youth Festival. We were interested to find in the Museum an Indian cupboard full with trophies and mementos won by the Russian volley-ball and football teams which had visited our country.

# 9

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## DAILY JOTTINGS

*12th June 1958:*

I arrived in Moscow from Helsinki by plane. It took me less than three hours. When I landed at the airport at 11 p.m. it was still evening and it was pleasant. I set foot on Soviet land with the feeling that here was I at last in a country I had always wanted to visit. Soon after alighting from the plane I got the good news that the other six members of the delegation who were coming directly from India were due to arrive in the next fifteen minutes.

And so they did. After the introductions, I was asked to say a few words to be relayed on Moscow Radio. I spoke in Hindi on behalf of the delegation, and said: "We have arrived in Moscow just now from India. We have come here as representatives of the Indian Youth Congress. We are indeed very pleased to be in your midst. We shall be in your country for about a month. We will be meeting young people and knowing and learning many new things. We have

My thanks are due to Mr. A. C. George, Rapporteur of our delegation, whose notes have been useful to me in compiling these jottings.

come here with open minds and open hearts and without any prejudices. We like to see and learn things as they are and convey the same to the young men and women of our country after our return. We hope that the bonds of friendship among the young men of Russia and India will be further strengthened by this visit of ours."

After the formalities were over, we were taken, in big cars, to Hotel Peking in the heart of Moscow. It was a long and pleasant drive. The rooms in the hotel were very good and comfortable.

*13th June:*

After a sumptuous breakfast, the first thing we did in Moscow was to go to the Indian Embassy. Our Ambassador, Mr. K. P. S. Menon, had gone on a tour of Siberia. We were received very cordially by Mr. Ahuja, the First Secretary. After the usual preliminary exchange of greetings, we discussed the itinerary during our stay in the Soviet Union. We took his advice on what should be the places that we must see and what should be the other programmes that could be profitably included in our schedule.

At 12-15, we were taken to the Headquarters of the Committee for Soviet Youth Organisations. They have a big building at their disposal with innumerable rooms and a large staff. We had preliminary discussions with Comrade Shevchenko on our month-long programme in the Soviet Union. Comrade Shevchenko asked us about our interests and the places we should like to see. We told him that apart from Moscow, Leningrad, Stalingrad, some places in the Ukraine, Crimea and Uzbekistan, we wanted to see some steel factories and farms, if possible, in the Sverdlovsk

or Magnitogorsk areas where large lands have been reclaimed and also the regions of Altai and Kazakhstan where cultivation had been started on virgin soil on a large scale. They in turn told us what we would find most interesting, noted our requirements and expectations, and requested us to meet them the next day for drawing up the final programme.

After lunch, we visited the University at Moscow built by the great Russian scientist Lamanov which is named after him. It was founded in 1755. This is its 204th year. The central building is 239 metres in height. It has thirteen Faculties, six for the sciences and seven for arts.

At present there are 22,000 students in the University of whom 15,500 are regular day scholars and 2,000 attend evening classes. An additional 4,500 learn through correspondence courses. About 80 per cent of the regular students have scholarships.

There is accommodation for about 6,000 students in the hostels. The hostel fees are very nominal. Those who attend the evening classes mostly work during the day and earn their living. They do not receive any scholarships.

Correspondence courses are meant mostly for those who live outside Moscow. They send their homework regularly through post and come up to the University twice a year for examinations.

Those who do not pass at the first attempt are removed from the rolls and are not eligible to appear for an examination a second time. The college courses usually take up 5½ years. After the courses, the students may take up post-graduate studies or jobs. Only the best students are selected according to the vacancies available. Therefore, there is

great competition among the students. They have to work hard, and this keeps the general standard of education very high. Those who have done some work in industry or agriculture for two years get preference.

Boys form 49 per cent of the present student strength, and the rest are girls. About 1,500 of them are foreigners. There are some Indian students also because of the special agreement recently concluded with the Government of India.

The new University building is a stupendous structure and we gathered that it has thousands of rooms. They told us that if we spent on an average one minute in each room it would take three months to complete a round of the University. The Youth Committee people had earlier told us that if we spent ten minutes in each room we would not be able to see it completely even in a whole lifetime! This was, evidently, an exaggerated statement calculated to impress outsiders. There are 150 lecture halls, and also sports grounds, gymnasias, halls for drama, music, opera, etc. Among auxiliary subjects, they study astronomy for which an observatory has been established outside Moscow City. The authorities were planning to take out 58 research expeditions this year on account of the International Geophysical year.

Of the 1,500 post-graduate students in the University ten per cent are foreigners. There are 450 professors, 600 lecturers, 550 scientific workers and 1,200 assistants and laboratory workers. The library has more than a million books.

The U.S.S.R. plans to have 39 universities in all, to which will be affiliated hundreds of institutions. The graduates who pass out of the universities have no difficulty in

Y.R.-7



finding work; the Government finds them jobs. Statistics show that about 90 per cent of the students are successful in the examinations; the 10 per cent who fail are expelled. Such students have a bleak future with little scope for progress. The number of students for each course is fixed beforehand by the Ministry of Education on the basis of the national requirements. In addition, in each college there are special courses for students who want to take them in their spare time. Such students are given all facilities.

Last year the total budget of the Moscow University was 280 million roubles. This year it has been increased to a million roubles a day. For special research, Government makes available extra funds to the University to the tune of about three million roubles.

After a student has passed his examination, a Government commission re-examines him and gives him a job according to his capability, personal desire and also taking into consideration the place he would like to live in.

The Head of the University who explained to us the details of its working conveyed through us the best wishes of his colleagues and himself to the professors and students of India.

After going round the University, we visited the hostels. The secretary of the students' union welcomed us and expressed the goodwill of the Soviet Union for India, its great leader Nehru and the Indian students. He informed us that there were many students' organisations in Moscow University like the Young Communist League (Komsomol), Young Trade Unionists, Scientific Students' Society, Sports Society and Tourists' Society. There is also a unit of the Communist Party of which some students are members. Out of

22,000 students. 16,000 were members of the Young Communist League. The hostels have student councils to look after sports programmes in the leisure time. There are also students' clubs which look after amateur artistic activities, such as painting, opera, theatre, music and dance.

Every college has an administrative body which includes one student representative elected by the Komsomol, with the right to vote. The giving of scholarships, among other things, is the responsibility of this Committee.

We were told that while the Komsomol was a political body the trade unions were not. Professors, teachers and the older students could become members of the trade union.

At the function organised by the students' union, Pratima sang a couple of Indian songs, including one from Tagore, which were greatly appreciated.

*14th June:*

In the morning we visited the underground railway which is called the Metro. We were received by the Director of Maintenance of the Railways. We were given the detailed history of the construction of the underground, since 1935, the year in which work on it was started. It has now a length of 43 miles with 47 stations, and employs 10,000 people. We had a ride on the railways, both on the radial and the ring systems, getting down at each important station, having a look round, and taking the next train. Trains ran at intervals of three to four minutes.

There is no doubt that the underground railway in Moscow is a great achievement and is run very efficiently. They have first-class escalators to take the passengers up and

down, and the stations are brilliantly lit with fine big chandeliers. The stations look beautiful because most of them are paved with marble stone. We were told that marble which was once used for making palaces of the Czars and noblemen is now being used for constructing places of public utility. The stations are also decorated with paintings and mosaic work in different styles. Apart from its normal utility, I think, the entire railway system can very well serve as an air-raid shelter during war-time. One of the stations was built by the Komsomol Youth, and is named after them.

At 12-30 we visited the Institute of Oriental Studies. We were received by the Chairman of the Institute who welcomed us on behalf of the staff and students. He gave us the details of the activities of the Institute especially with reference to India. These days Russians are giving greater importance to the study of Indian subjects because of the friendship between the two countries. Many students were learning Hindi, some Bengali, Urdu, Marathi and Malayalam. They are now busy translating the works of Tagore, Bharati, Bankim Chandra, Premchand, Nirala and others. Indian philosophy also holds a high place in the curriculum. They also study Indian economics, especially the foreign industries in India, changes in the Indian agricultural system and the role of the public sector.

One of the specialists in Indo-Soviet studies, Professor Golberg, has brought to light from old documents and records the friendly relations that existed between Russia and India in the 17th and 18th centuries. The research scholars have been able to establish connections between the two countries dating as far back as the tenth century. The Institute is proposing to publish the ancient and modern history of India including that of 1857.

One thing struck me as quite surprising. Although they were studying, preparing theses and papers, and also material for articles for publication in the Soviet newspapers and magazines, on the work of many well-known writers, authors and political thinkers of India, the name of Mahatma Gandhi was conspicuously missing from amongst them. They described Tilak with great appreciation and liked his philosophy, but they said nothing of Gandhiji. Even some persons scarcely known in India found a place in their studies.

When I got up to thank them, I brought this fact to their notice. "If you really want to know the mind of the present generation and youth of India you will not be able to do so properly unless you study Gandhi," I said. I had just made a passing reference without expecting a reply. But they took my remarks very seriously, and their Chairman and a sectional expert explained to us at length that their Government and the Party differed with the principles and ideologies of Gandhiji, but liked those of Tilak. But, to me it was astonishing that in an academic Institution of this type, the study of Gandhiji's philosophy was ignored because of differences in political ideologies.

At 4-20 p.m. we went to the office of the Youth Committee for the second time for finalising our programme. They had drawn up an itinerary which on the whole seemed quite good, although some of the things that we wanted to see had not been included in it. It was also made clear to us that we were free to go wherever we liked without any restriction. While fixing our programmes everywhere, they would instruct the local people to place more emphasis on showing us the youth activities, arranging for our meetings with young people, taking us to the schools and hostels, and

showing us games and sports and how the young men spend their spare time. It would also include sight-seeing and cultural activities like ballets and dramas.

*15th June:*

In the morning at about 10-30 after breakfast the rest of the delegation went to Jasnaya Palana, the estate of Count Leo Tolstoy about 126 miles away from Moscow. As I was a little tired and I had to do some writing, I did not join the group. After their return, the delegation members told me they had had bad luck with the weather, as it was raining all the time. They had been received with great courtesy by the Deputy Director of the Tolstoy Museum. Tolstoy had spent more than 50 years there and most of his important books had been written there. The house had been kept exactly in the same condition as Tolstoy had maintained it.

In the evening I went with one of our Indian friends, Mr. Jayaswal, who is at present working in the Hindi Section of Moscow Radio, to the biggest department store of Moscow called "Gum".

It was undoubtedly a large department store and was crowded with people. But most of the things available were groceries of daily use, such as bread, butter, milk, fish and meat. There were other consumer goods also, but not in adequate quantities, nor in varieties either. The prices seemed to be high. Electrical goods were comparatively cheap. I bought an electrical gramophone fitted with a loudspeaker with volume control. It cost me only 175 rupees. A good piece for its price. Television sets were also cheap and could

be had for 800 roubles. Gramophone records also were expensive. It was surprising that long-playing records, which would cost about Rs. 35 to 40 in India, were available there at five roubles.

Afterwards we had dinner with one of our well-known authors, Dr. Ramkumar Varma, whose services have been loaned by the Government of India to the Soviet University. He is on a high post there and is well looked after and respected.

There were a few more Indians living in Moscow. Some of them studying in the University were present at the dinner. Having arrived in Russia so recently we naturally wanted to know as much of the life there as possible. But our fellow guests were more keen on explaining to us their viewpoints on Soviet life than on giving us factual information which we wanted. Dr. Varma, obviously, did not like their behaviour, and kept himself aloof from the discussions.

#### *16th June:*

In the morning, we went to see the famous Lenin Stadium. It is a huge place with seating capacity of one lakh. A round of shopping and a visit to the office of the Central Committee of the Komsomol in the afternoon and a ballet performance at night were among the rest of our engagements for the day.

#### *17th June:*

In the morning we were given a friendly welcome by the Society for Indo-Soviet Friendship. Though the gathering

was small, many top people from different walks of life, especially those interested in the cultural life of India, as well as scientists, academicians and people connected with medicine, agriculture and sports were present. The producer and director of the famous Indo-Soviet film "Pardesi", Deputy Director of Mosfilm (Moscow Film), and the Director of the Tolstoy Museum, Comrade Popavkin, were among those present.

The Society was founded only this year, its main object being to consolidate further the friendly bonds between our two countries. The arrangement of meetings between the Soviet intellectuals and prominent Indians who are either staying in or are on a visit to Moscow are among the main activities of the Society.

After formal exchange of greetings we split into various groups to have more personal talks. Everybody was pleased with the frank and free exchange of views in a friendly atmosphere. We presented our hosts with literature on Vinobaji's *Bhoodan* movement. They are keen to have books and other literature from India..

In the evening we went to see the Moscow Industrial and Agricultural Museum. It is a permanent museum situated in spacious buildings. Apart from the main pavilions, there are structures constructed by all the Republics of the Soviet Union in their own respective architectural style and which are reserved for the exhibition of industrial and agricultural products of their own. The Museum and its grounds with fountains, lawns and decorations are fascinating. It would take several days to go round and see the whole exhibition minutely. As we had only one evening to see this exhibition, we had to make a quick round of the

main pavilions. One of the pavilions which attracted our attention was the Sputnik Pavilion. A full-size replica of a Sputnik was kept there, and the experts explained to us the details about the first and second Sputniks. The pavilion from the Republic of Georgia was mainly filled with fruits and vegetables. There was also a Glass House attached to the pavilion where they actually grow Georgian fruits. Another pavilion showing the peaceful uses of atomic energy interested us.

*18th June:*

In the morning, we went to see the Kremlin. There are several old-style cathedrals inside. In front of the Kremlin, there is a huge steel bell weighing more than 200 tons and a big gun of 40 tons — 'a gun which was never fired' and 'a bell which was never rung'. The bell is actually a huge bulk of cast steel. It was damaged while being shifted to the Kremlin.

The visit naturally excited us, for we had heard and read so much about the place where so many important and historic decisions have been and are being taken affecting the entire world. Unfortunately the main buildings where their parliament meets were under repair, and in spite of special efforts made by our friends they did not get permission for taking us round.

There is no doubt that the Soviet people have suffered a great deal in the last war, both in men and material. Therefore, it is natural that these people should be against any war. Yet they are not afraid of wars; they are fully prepared and have equipped themselves for a war if forced upon them. They feel and say that they have enemies



all over the world. Therefore, they justify the kind of rigid and hard life they have to lead. However, they are sure that nobody will ever be able to bomb their dear city — “Moskua”. If anybody ever dared do it he would have to pay dearly for it.

We were also shown the Museum House in the Kremlin near the entrance. Here they have collected and preserved many things belonging to the Czars. These decorative and valuable pieces have become now a part of history. Various kinds of crowns, thrones, ornaments and costumes, armour and chariots are kept on view.

In the evening we were taken to an excellent puppet show. It was an amusing show, indeed, and very well presented. Considerable imagination and skill were used to make the show look realistic.

*19th June:*

In the morning, we were taken to the Central Office of the Young Pioneers' Organisation. It was the first time that an Indian delegation was visiting their office.

We also had a hurried peep into the great Lenin Library. We were told it has more than twenty million books in 160 languages. There are twenty large halls, many reading rooms and twenty sets of equipment to read micro-films.

In the evening, we visited the Art Gallery of Moscow. Here, too, we did not have much time to spend. We were told, however, that they would arrange to give us more time to see the Art Gallery of Leningrad which is much bigger and more famous.

In the night we were to leave Moscow and the comfortable abode we had for the last eight days at Hotel Peking, a structure twelve storeys high and with 210 rooms. The charge for double rooms is 40 to 75 roubles per day, exclusive of food. Ordinarily food would cost about 80 to 100 roubles per day. One thing I noticed was that the lifts in the hotel were all operated by women.

At 9-30 p.m. the Delegation left for Leningrad by the Moscow-Helsinki Express. The train was good and comfortable. How we wished this journey was during day time so that we could see more of the countryside.

*22nd June:*

We were returning from Rarzhif. On the way in the woods as well as on the seashore we saw many small cottages. On enquiry we were told that they were summer houses belonging to private persons. People go there usually for week-ends. They also have gardens for growing flowers, vegetables and other agricultural produce. Some people also live there permanently. Usually engineers, scientists, academicians and others who get high salaries can afford to have houses like these. Such houses can be built or bought by individuals on their own. Loans are given by the Government for such houses.

Life in Leningrad seemed to be more leisurely and cultured than in Moscow. I wanted to find out why there was so much difference between the two cities. I was told that there still were many ancient cultured families living in Leningrad and their influence pervaded its society. Hence Leningrad has remained a cultural centre. I do not know whether the people who told me this understood the full

significance of what they said, but it appeared to me that they realised that the changes brought about in the social life were not all for the good. There are many good things always prevalent even in a decadent society. Of course, the elements which keep society from progressing must be changed, but if all things are destroyed merely because they are old, without any effort being made at substituting something equally good, there is bound to be a social void. Old ways, customs and culture play their part in conserving the traditions which keep society going. The Soviet Union is still passing through a transitionary phase, in which most of the cultural values of the past have been lost, but something new to replace them has not yet been found. I felt that the people have realised this and are making attempts to overcome this shortcoming.

After the Revolution, owing to the frequent purges, the Russians have mostly lost that link with the past, and their life naturally has become more rough, rigid and rugged. This is more obvious in Moscow, it being the seat of the Government and centre of political and Party activities. This may be the reason for the lack of not only a cultured and refined atmosphere, but also delicacy and sweetness on the faces of the people. People in Leningrad have a little more leisure. There is less of running about. The city, though small, is beautiful, and has many gardens.

Usually, we used to return to our hotel very late at 12-30 to 1-00 in the night and sometimes even later. In spite of this we had made it a rule that howsoever late we might return, we would have a meeting of the delegation practically every day. It helped us in exchanging notes, knowing the viewpoints of one another and sharing our experiences during the day. Though at times it was very

tiresome, we found that it was very useful, and it helped us a great deal in the success of our mission. Because of this continuous exchange of views we could behave in a more disciplined manner as a team, which ultimately helped in creating, on the whole, a good impression about the youth of our country.

*23rd June:*

In the morning we went to see the Nivskya Machine Tool Factory which is named after Lenin. This factory is a hundred years old, and is one of the oldest in the Soviet Union. Originally it used to produce pig iron; later it switched over to ship building and now it produces locomotives, turbines, and machines for the chemical and metallurgical industries, as well as machinery for export. It was ordered to produce twenty-three compressors and turbines for the iron and steel plant at Bhilai, out of which 21 have already been despatched and the remaining two are getting ready.

When we saw the factory from inside, very frankly I was not much impressed. Looking to the unorganised state of things, with materials lying all over the place, and the dirt and filth, I was surprised when I learnt that the factory had received the Order of Lenin for its production results. I thought that on the whole the factory was not running efficiently, and there were many more workers than it should ordinarily have.

The majority of us left the factory, but two members stayed behind to take food with the workers in their canteen. They reported to us that they saw women doing very hard work. An old woman of 60 was still at work, although we

were told that the age of retirement was 55 for men and 50 for women. The workers were keenly interested to know about the conditions and wages of the working class in India, and also whether the women also worked in the factories. They also wanted to know what difference there was between the highest and the lowest scales of wages in our country. They liked the idea of higher income-tax and super-tax, and introduction of death duty, expenditure tax and wealth tax in India.

*24th June:*

After a very pleasant stay of four days in Leningrad we left by air for the Crimea. The ride was long, rough and tiring, particularly because the plane touched down at Minsk, Kiev and Dnepropetrovsk.

From the aerodrome we were directly driven in four big cars to Yalta, the famous sea resort of the Crimea. On the way at our request we stopped at the Alustha Pioneer Camp where the young pioneers had gathered for a camp fire. This short halt, which enabled us to mix with young and happy children, made us forget our day's fatigue and we continued our journey refreshed, reaching Yalta almost at midnight.

*25th June:*

Because of the tiring journey, we enjoyed the comfortable rest we had at this beautiful health resort on the Black Sea. We got up fresh and happy. After breakfast we were taken, at about eleven o'clock, to the Artek Pioneer Camp

where we were received with ovation and affection. Small children flooded us with flowers and bouquets.

After spending the day at the Camp we went to the local botanical garden in the evening. It was a beautiful garden built during the days of the Czars. Trees brought from all parts of the world are grown in this well-kept place. They give an idea to the local people of the vegetation which grows in different countries.

The common people on the streets and elsewhere were extremely friendly to us. They like Indian people and were full of praise for our Prime Minister. Wherever we went we were received with spontaneous joy and hearty welcome.

People were very keen to talk to us in spite of the language difficulty. Very few knew English, and hence interpreters were in demand. Whoever knew a little English in the crowd was brought to us and through him the people went on asking friendly questions about everything under the sun.

They were proud of their city, apart from being proud of their Soviet nationality. Every round of talk would end with the question how we liked their city. We had had the same experience in Leningrad.

### *26th June:*

After the heavy and tiring programmes since the delegation's arrival in Russia, this day was a day of relaxation, a day of outing on the shores of the beautiful Black Sea at Yalta and nearabout health resorts. The colour of the sea water was a beautiful deep blue. After breakfast we started

in a motor-boat for Mishov. On the way the boat stopped at a few stations. We were going along the beach and could see hundreds of people lying on the sands, having a sunbath or bathing, boating and playing.. Practically the entire shore at this end has been developed for the benefit of the people who come and stay in Sanatoria, for leisure and pleasure. As soon as we arrived in Mishov we jumped straightway into the sea and had a pleasant and refreshing bath. The water was very cold but we enjoyed swimming and boating all the same.

After lunch we went round for sight-seeing. One of the places which interested us was the famous Vrensosky palace, a mixture of European and Arab styles, a combination of Mughal type domes and Gothic windows.

Apart from Gyano and Misha who had been accompanying us from Moscow, the local friends including Eric and Naza were with us all the time. We had started making friends here also. Naza, a good, friendly and efficient woman, looked after us like a real elder sister. She got vegetarian food specially prepared for us with great care with different dishes every day. Wherever we were supposed to go she would proceed in advance by a separate car. When we reached there we would find everything properly arranged for us. We were deeply impressed by her serene and efficient personality.

While we were coming in the boat the passengers crowded round us and it became almost a festival for them as well as for us. We mixed and sang with them.

In the evening we were taken round to see Alupka, the venue of the famous Yalta Conference of 1945 where Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt took important decisions on

war and peace. We were shown the place where the conference was held and also where the Big Three had stayed. The place where Churchill lived is a nice building. When Prime Minister Nehru visited Russia in 1955 he also stayed in that house. It is now a sanatorium.

*27th June:*

This was our last night in Crimea. We had greatly enjoyed our stay in this region, meeting children belonging to the Young Pioneers, visiting different sanatoria, and taking sea baths which made us fresh again for the heavy programme ahead of us. It was as a matter of fact very well timed. After a two weeks' heavy and strenuous programme there was a break and we had a well-deserved rest. We began the next lap of our tour with renewed vigour and zeal.

I told members of our delegation that the second stage of our tour was over and we were entering the third. Till now we had kept ourselves under strict discipline and control. We were trying to study the local conditions, the people and the youth leaders; we were trying to know what kind of people they were and what was expected of us. Hereafter we could behave a little more freely, be at ease, and mix with the people as much as we could and make friends with them.

*28th June:*

In the morning Young Pioneers from a nearby camp came along without any previous arrangement to meet us and gave us a happy send-off from Crimea. We started on our long motor journey at about 9 a.m. and stopped at



Alustha for a last dip in the sea. This is where we were to bid good-bye to the sea and climb on to the mountain to go to Simferopol.

Soon after lunch we were to leave by plane for Kiev, capital of the Ukraine. It had been so good to be with Eric and Naza for four days. They had been very different from the others.

We presented some Indian scarves and other mementos to Eric, Naza and other local friends and bid good-bye to Crimea, a place we had greatly liked as much for its climate and natural beauty as its people, who were very friendly. We left Simferopol by plane at 3-55 arriving at Kiev at 6-45 in the evening. On the way our plane halted for a short while at Nicholai.

At the Kiev airport I was asked to say a few words for the local Radio. This is what I said: "We come on behalf of the Youth Section of the Indian National Congress, the party of our beloved leader, Pandit Nehru. We are seven in all, coming from all parts of India. We have been in your country for nearly seventeen days now. Wherever we have gone we have found immense love and affection for our Prime Minister and our country.

"We shall be in Kiev for about six days. We have heard a great deal about the Ukraine. We are glad we shall be able to see all that with our own eyes. Tomorrow is the first Soviet Youth Day. We are very happy that we shall be able to join you in celebrating it and to convey the good wishes of the Indian youth to the youth of the Soviet Union. We are grateful for your hearty welcome.

"We are studying and seeing with an open mind and an open heart the youth activities of your country. After our return we shall tell the youth of our country about the

Soviet youth's great part in the reconstruction of your country. Once again we are grateful to you for your hospitality."

After dinner we were taken to a show of Cinerama, a new technique in filmcraft. It is much more realistic than even three-dimensional films; and one feels that one is witnessing not a film but an actual scene at its site.

*29th June:*

We started the day with sight-seeing. We saw the statues of war heroes and monuments in memory of unknown warriors. After a round of the city, we went on top of a hill and saw, from that vantage point, the city of Kiev on one side and the Dnieper flowing on the other. We also saw the grave of Uridol Gorky, founder of Moskva, a church built in the 11th century and other places of interest. The local Komsomol office was situated in a palatial four-storeyed building.

At noon we went to see the children's railway. In the afternoon about 4-30 we were taken to the huge sports stadium named after Khrushchev who comes from this region. The stadium had been named after him even before he became the Prime Minister of the U.S.S.R. It was a festival day, since they were celebrating the Soviet Youth Day for the first time. The celebrations were very impressive. Afterwards we had the unforgettable experience of being mobbed by friendly people.

*30th June:*

~~2.~~ In the morning we went to see the Agricultural Institution for young children. We were shown round all the

departments and explained the activities in detail. The children were acquainting themselves with research in agriculture. There was a farm attached to the institution for practical work.

At noon we were taken to a Young Pioneers' camp for young geologists. We had our lunch there and stayed till the evening. Here also we had an enjoyable time in the company of children and watching their activities.

At night I retired a little earlier while the other friends saw a circus show. They told me later that the circus was very good. They were full of praise for the magic show which was shown along with the circus. The tricks were almost incredible and were performed with great skill and showmanship which is the essence of such shows. They said that I had really missed something which was of the highest standard.

One thing struck me as remarkable here. The people are not very greatly conscious of their parentage or family heritage. They did not take pride in their family name nor were they ashamed if they were children of ordinary people. What mattered was their own achievements. This was indeed a new experience and I liked it. The second name of one of our acquaintances meant 'curly haired'. In a casual talk with us he informed us without any hesitation how he came to be called by this name. His grandfather had been an illegitimate child and our friend also did not know his parents' family names. When he went for a job in one of the government departments the officer as usual asked him for his family name. As he did not know it he told the officer about his origin. Not minding this in the least, the officer told him that as he had lovely curly hair he would give him the name 'curly haired'.

They have truly given up the idea of an individual's importance or greatness based on his inheritance. If someone has done something creditable or achieved something worth-while in one's own life only then does one receive recognition. But, on the other hand, even small things are exaggerated and eulogised too much. National self-respect has almost developed into a fetish. The smallest achievements are praised publicly and discussed in newspapers. Big titles are given. Even in the fields of sports, dance, drama and literature if one has achieved some name, one is immediately made into a hero. His income also goes up tremendously and he gets national recognition which is a great asset for a growing young man. It is a great incentive to bid for greater achievements and reach newer heights. But, unfortunately, these facilities are available mostly to members of the Communist Party, as elsewhere in the Soviet Union.

I think we in our country have to learn a good deal in this respect from Russia, of course, eschewing the undesirable features. Unless we praised and gave due credit for the achievements of our young men, who else would?

*1st July:*

We spent the first day of the new month at a *kòlkhoz* (collective farm) at Lubertse, about 36 miles from Kiev. We were received by the Chairman of the farm which had the name *Slahet do Kommunism* (Way to Communism). The Chairman explained to us the details of the working of the farm with the aid of quite a lot of statistics, as usual. The figures, of course, were impressive.

After collecting the statistical information we went to see the farm itself. It was situated on a very vast area and we had to move about in cars from end to end. The farm was sub-divided into four or five main centres. At each of these centres there were houses, work-sheds and cattle-sheds, and each centre controlled the respective area around it.

We visited a couple of houses of the members of the *kolkhoz*. They were ordinary houses, like the ones we have on farms in India. There was nothing special except for the difference due to the climate and the way of living. They were *kutchas* mud huts with animals living in the adjacent room and agricultural implements lying all over the place.

The farmers, like their counterparts all over the world, were very friendly, and gave us a hearty welcome. After quite a tiresome morning we had a sumptuous lunch as guests of the Chairman of the farm. It was drizzling a little; so we had to take food indoors. We would have enjoyed better taking food outdoors. The Chairman and the other people looked real hardworking farmers, hefty and strong, good eaters and drinkers. They enjoyed jokes very well. Every time we said something, they had a spontaneous and hearty laugh. Ukrainians are famed for being people who can enjoy a joke and being jolly all the time.

After lunch we had to rush back to the City to keep an appointment at 5-15 with Mr. Boronsky, the First Deputy Minister for Planning of the Ukraine. We had a very interesting discussion with him on many controversial topics. As a matter of fact, this interview had been specially arranged for us because we were keen to discuss with someone the present state of affairs in the Soviet Union and

its economic policies. Therefore, this was one of the important engagements of our tour, and we were happy to meet the Minister.

On being asked what he thought of the new policy of Premier Khrushchev regarding decentralisation, he gave us the following information.

There were three types of industries which are under the Central Government. Except these, all other industries were managed by the Governments of the different Republics. The big industries were controlled by the Centre and the medium-size and small-scale industries were under the Republics. As a matter of fact, the process of decentralisation had always been in force. But the Republics had now secured even more powers from the Centre. Soon after the Revolution they had a great shortage of scientists and technicians. Therefore, they had to centralise everything. Now they had enough scientists, who could independently work in their own industrial fields. In the beginning they had to prepare a pool of industrial experts. Every country needs to have this base before it can go ahead with decentralisation. They knew from the beginning that decentralisation was always more profitable.

Formerly they had only 40 per cent of the industries under the control of the Republics. Now they have 90 per cent. The Central Government decided which region should produce which things and how much. Out of the commodities produced, the Centre decided the quantum of production for 409 items for each region in accordance with the requirements of the nation. These 409 items had been selected particularly because they were needed by all parts of the country.

In the Central Planning Commission there were representatives of each Republic who gave information about their production capacity, the things that they could produce cheaper, and their own requirements. After taking stock of the requirements of the different regions, the Central Planning Commission decided the production target for each Republic and the quantum it had to part with for the sister Republics. The Assembly of each Republic decided in what manner the production was to be regulated in the context of the general requirements of the country.

The Ministers of the Republics did not inform each factory directly what it had to do. Their Planning Commissions gave general directions to each factory with regard to their production, and the rest was left to be worked out by individual units. The Ministry only kept a check and general control. Owing to the decentralisation, it had been found that in the first half of this year they had produced 11 per cent more than in the corresponding period of the previous year. Mr. Boronsky gave various examples and illustrations in support of the above views on decentralisation.

We were told that even earlier the different Republics were under no compulsion. The U.S.S.R. being a voluntary union of different Republics which had come together of their own free will and choice, they had the freedom to adopt policies they liked.

We could easily see that the administrators had great respect for Premier Khrushchev, but it was impressed on us that the decentralisation had not been introduced just because he wanted it. It had been done because it was necessary for the country. This was not the Prime Minister's

personal policy as described all over the world, but a policy that had been considered and decided by the 20th Congress.

When our friend Mittal asked Mr. Boronsky for his views regarding the personality cult, he replied as follows:

The personality cult did not depend on the fact that Stalin was both Prime Minister and Secretary of the Party. Lenin also had held both the positions simultaneously. That, as a matter of fact, had helped the country and there was nothing wrong in thus combining the two posts. But when Stalin became the head of the Government as well as of the Party, many undesirable mistakes crept in. These mistakes were committed because everything depended upon the personality of Stalin — a single individual. After Khrushchev became the leader of both the Government and the Party, quick work had been going on to discourage the personality cult. Khrushchev did not decide everything by himself. The decisions were taken not even by the Central Committee, but by the people. Everything was decided by a much bigger body where more people had a say.

They now knew from their own experience that though Khrushchev had become the leader of both the Party and the Government simultaneously, there was no danger of a return to the personality cult. When very important programmes had to be carried through, the leader should be one who had a clear vision and one who had the full confidence of the people. Premier Khrushchev, Mr. Boronsky added, was such an individual. This could be easily understood by people who were familiar with the place occupied by Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru in India. The leaders of a nation should not remain away or aloof from the people.



Manubhai asked Mr. Boronsky why in the Soviet Union inequality still existed to such a large extent. The pay scales varied from 300 or 400 roubles to 30,000 roubles per month. The Ukrainian Minister replied that there were not many who got 25,000 or 30,000 roubles. Only a few scientists and technicians got that much but they were engaged in very useful constructive work. They, however, did not get a fixed salary. It depended on how much work they did. In the present state of affairs in Russia, he said, it was not possible to give equal payments. Everybody should get on the basis of the work done. Whosoever worked harder or produced more should get more. The level of industrial progress reached was not uniform in all the regions. It was necessary, in view of the backwardness of some regions, that the progress should be faster there than elsewhere. In the coal industry the average wage was much more. Some got as much as 5,000 or 6,000 roubles a month. The wages depended on the kind of industry the worker was engaged in.

A director of a large factory generally got about 3,000 to 4,000 roubles. Such a person was in charge of a steel factory which produced three times the total steel production of India. The pay of an ordinary minister was 5,000 roubles. They were not satisfied with the lower level of payments; they wanted to increase it progressively. Mr. Khrushchev had said that one of their aims was to increase the pay of the lower paid people. Mr. Boronsky also told us that a member of the Ukrainian Parliament wanted to buy a small electric powerhouse and shift it to his small town. He was prepared to pay a lakh of roubles for it.

We asked Mr. Boronsky why there was so much difference between the exchange rates of the rouble. Their official rate was 1.2 roubles to a rupee, they gave to the visitors 2

roubles for a rupee whereas the international price of a rouble was considered to be 4 to 5 annas only. He frankly admitted that he did not know anything about it because this subject related to the Centre and he was the Planning Minister of only one of the Republics. In the beginning he was rather reluctant to answer such of our questions as were not directly related to his subject, but later he became more informal and said that he would try to answer whatever we wanted to know.

The interview lasted for about two and a quarter hours. It was interesting on the whole and provided new information to the delegation.

Soon after the talks we were taken to the television station of Kiev. After we had made a round of the station, we were requested to appear on a television programme. Palit gave a short talk in Bengali on our impressions about the Soviet Union, and it was translated into Russian sentence by sentence. This gesture of ours to speak in one of the important regional languages of India which was also the language of Rabindranath Tagore, a name with which people here were familiar, was very much appreciated.

After our return to the hotel there was another programme awaiting us. The local film unit shot a film of the delegation and also recorded a short talk by me on tape.

### *2nd July:*

In the morning we visited a factory producing precision electrical instruments. Com. Volik, the director of the factory, and Com. Gorgi Stably, the Komsomol Secretary, received us and showed us round. According to the details

given by them, the factory had 3000 workers of whom 60 per cent were women. The minimum wage was 650 roubles and the highest wage was 3,500. For engineers the minimum was 1,000 roubles and the maximum 3,000. Half the workers were young people, and four-fifths had received higher education. The factory had been able to save one million roubles by adopting rationalisation measures. From this saving they proposed to build houses for the workers. Forty per cent of the workers already had quarters given by the factory to live in.

The factory produced 120 different types of instruments. Most of the workers were specialists and particular attention was paid to the qualifications of workers and technicians. An evening technical school was attached to the factory. Nearly 200 students were studying in the school, and another 150 were attending the evening classes. Out of the workers of the factory 700 were studying for higher degrees in the schools of the plant or outside.

The factory was neat and clean and it appeared to be efficiently run. I was presented with an electric-shaver of fairly good quality produced in the factory.

While we were there a woman worker of the factory requested us to pay a visit to her house. The invitation appeared spontaneous. She and her aged mother would be happy to welcome us, she said. We were, of course, received very well by the woman worker and her mother, but as soon as we entered the house it was evident that the invitation had been pre-arranged. The house was specially decorated, rather a little too gaudily, if I may say so. Large quantities of fruits, drinks and other things were kept ready for us.

We were also shown round the club house of the factory which they called "Place of Culture." This was a good structure with facilities for different types of sports and cultural activities.

In the afternoon we had to leave for Moscow. Our stay in the Ukraine had been cut short by a day because of an urgent call from Moscow (for, as it later turned out, an interview with Premier Khrushchev).

Our stay in Kiev was very pleasant and full of interesting incidents and happy memories. The Youth Day and our participation in it was in itself a great event for us. The people were even more friendly than at other places, probably because they had not met many Indians earlier. Puran Singh Azad, as could be expected, was a sensation here too with his Sikh turban and beard. People would not leave him alone even when he was dining in the hotel. We felt as though he was a film personality being mobbed.

The hotel we stayed in was good and comfortable and the food satisfactory. Comrades Ludmila, Tolai, Nascholi and other local friends from the Youth Committee looked after us very well. Ludmila was an efficient and dignified lady. She did her job with meticulous care. But she was rather aloof and there seemed to be no personal touch in whatever she did.

Before boarding the plane for Moscow we thanked all the friends who had come to see us off and presented them with scarves and other presents which we had taken from India. They appreciated our gesture as also the things we gave them. When we referred to Ludmila, in true Indian fashion, as one of our sisters, she was deeply moved.

We had not expected it of her, having taken her to be aloof by temperament and a rather matter of fact woman.

At the Moscow airport we were received by Comrades Popov and Nikilai. It made us feel good to see Popov again, with his infectious friendliness and bonhomie. His sportsmanship and the way he mixed on a basis of equality with his subordinates struck us as unusual qualities for one to rise so high in the hierarchy of the Youth Committee.

When we returned to Hotel Peking, we were back once again in a familiar place, after a long and tiring journey.

### *3rd July:*

In the morning we exchanged views with the leaders of the Soviet Youth Committee, our hosts, and other youth leaders.

After the meeting was over we rushed back to the hotel for a quick lunch since we had to leave at 2-30 p.m. for the Kremlin where we were scheduled to meet the Soviet Prime Minister at 3 p.m. This most unexpected meeting was one of the unforgettable and delightful memories of our tour.

In the evening we saw an interesting football match held in the great Lenin Stadium between a local team and a French football team which had specially come over to play the match.

### *4th July:*

It was a comparatively light day and we spent the morning shopping. The delegates were left to themselves to

go about and buy things they liked. We were invited to a lunch at the Indian Embassy by our Ambassador, Shri K. P. S. Menon. This was the first time we were meeting him because he was not in town during our first visit to Moscow. He made us feel immediately at home. We were happy to meet him and members of his staff, some of whom joined us at lunch. As Mrs. Menon was not there, it fell upon Mrs. Ahuja, wife of the First Secretary, to play hostess. We were impressed by her charming and dignified manners.

Even more than the delicious Indian food, for which we were longing after so many days, we appreciated the opportunity to have the benefit of the views of our Ambassador. He was happy with the way our delegation had conducted itself, specially because, as he told us, some of the Indians who had gone to Russia during the Moscow Festival had created a bad impression by not behaving in a befitting manner. We were impressed by the Ambassador's knowledge and wisdom, and felt proud that our country was represented by him in one of the most important capitals of the world. It is no wonder he is held in such high esteem by the other diplomats in Moscow.

Before taking leave of him we told him that we wanted to present to the Indian Embassy a statue of Tolstoy which was given to us by the youths of Leningrad as a memento of the delegation's visit to the U.S.S.R. He appreciated the idea. He also agreed to invite, from time to time, Soviet Youth leaders to the Indian Embassy at its official functions.

[After our return to India we received a letter from Shri Menon in which he said: "Many thanks for your letter of the 17th July. I was very happy to have met you here.

My only regret is that we could not see more of each other. Your delegation has left a very pleasant impression behind.

"I am very glad you suggested that we should invite some of the Soviet youth leaders. Last evening we asked them to a party and I was very happy to meet them."]

In the evening we went for a leisurely stroll in the Gorky Park, "The Park of Culture", as they call it. It is situated in a vast area along the River Moskva. Many theatres, restaurants and playgrounds, are situated within this area, where people usually came in large numbers to spend their leisure hours.

Later in the evening Com. Yurapavlov, representative of the youth newspaper *Soviet Land*, came with a tape-recorder for an interview with the delegation. He asked the following questions to which different members of our delegation gave suitable replies:—

1. What is the aim of your delegation in studying the Soviet Youth Organisations?
2. What places did you visit and what places do you intend to visit with this aim?
3. The activities of which youth organisations of the U.S.S.R. did you study?
4. What is your impression of your stay in the U.S.S.R.? What struck you most? What main features of the U.S.S.R. attracted you?
5. Besides studying about youth organisations, did you also study something about the educational system of the U.S.S.R.? What is your impression?

6. Mr. Bajaj had said that the Indian Youth Delegation had learnt many useful things during its stay in the U.S.S.R. What are those useful things?
7. The Indian Delegation who were present at the Youth Festival said that they would propagate the idea of the festival in India. What sort of Youth Festival did you have in India? What are the preparations that the Indian youths are making for the next festival? Does Mr. Nehru welcome the idea of such festivals?
8. Yesterday you met our Prime Minister. What talks did you have with him and what is your impression of the interview?
9. Do you think your visit to the U.S.S.R. will promote friendship and co-operation between the youths of India and the U.S.S.R.? If so, how?
10. What more do you have to say at the conclusion of this interview?

I had not received letters from India for more than three weeks. I was sure that it was impossible that letters were not sent. This worried me. [As I gathered later, my family in India were also perturbed because they had not received any news from me.] The same was the case with other members of the delegation. I did not know why letters should have taken such a long time. Ordinarily a letter should not take more than four or five days, since there is regular air service between Russia and India. This delay made us feel that our letters may be going through some sort of censorship. When we complained about this to our hosts, it had very little effect on them. As there was no news from home we were all unhappy, and I tried to speak to my family by telephone.



As I had to be back without delay because of an urgent call from the A.I.C.C. office, the Youth Committee friends were trying hard to get me accommodation on the first available plane to India. They said no seat was available immediately, but there was possibility of last-minute cancellations. We waited till 2 a.m., but nothing came about. I had ultimately to give up the idea of going directly to India. After consultation with other members of the delegation it was decided that I should go to Tashkent, along with them, spend a day there, and leave three or four days earlier than the rest of them for Delhi *via* Kabul. The difficulty, however, was that there were only two flights a week from Kabul to India.

*5th July:*

The morning was free of engagements and the delegates went out for their last round of shopping, moving about and meeting friends. At 5-45 in the evening we were taken to the Moscow television station.

The whole delegation was requested to appear on the television along with Com. Shivchenko. He introduced each member of the delegation to the audience and then requested me to say a few words about our impressions of the Soviet Union as the tour was about to end very shortly. The talk was given in Hindi. They had procured an advance copy of my talk so that they could keep the Russian translation ready. [Please see Appendix II]

I was told that the talk was generally well received. As a matter of fact I tried to tell very briefly, yet honestly, our impressions — good as well as bad. Therefore, I was

glad to see their reaction and to note that they appreciated the frank talk. That they liked it was obvious soon after the talk. The Chief Editor of the Youth Newspapers, the number of which runs to more than 60, came to me to take my permission to publish the talk in all their chain of newspapers. I gave them permission, but with a condition! I told them that either they should publish the interview as a whole without any deletions or they should not publish it at all, because I did not want anything to be published torn out of context; for I knew that if some portions of the talk were left out its balance could have been disturbed, possibly leading to misinterpretation. As far as my information goes the talk was never published in any of their magazines. Probably, they wanted to publish only portions which suited them, and hence this conditional permission was not to their liking.

*6th July:*

We were to leave at about 1 a.m. for the airport. We therefore kept awake during the night talking, comparing notes, and exchanging farewells with our Russian friends. Because of fog, however, the departure was delayed. Every half an hour our friends would make enquiries and tell us we had to wait for some more time; and so the whole night was spent in uncertainty. None of us had any sleep. Finally our plane took off at about 7 a.m.

We were bound homewards *via* Uzbekistan after an interesting and useful stay of 24 days. These had been hectic days for us, moving about from place to place, meeting people, seeing different places, giving talks, gathering new impressions. I had not found it so difficult when

such missions had taken me to other European countries earlier. Firstly, there had been not much of language difficulty, and secondly, the systems prevalent there had been easy to grasp. In Russia everything was different. Social life, customs, political ideologies, and the methods of a controlled society were things we had never been familiar with. We were having new experiences all the time. There was so much to see and learn. We were very happy to be in Russia but equally happy that we were returning home after the strenuous tour.

It was in a jet aircraft that we were now travelling. Soon after the take-off we reached a height of eight to nine miles. The flight was smooth and comfortable. The only difference was that the service and facilities were less adequate. In a big plane of its size we were surprised that there was only one hostess who could not attend to all passengers promptly. No food or drinks were served. The washroom had only a cold-water tap running. There were no towels, and not even a piece of soap!

After three and a half hours' flight we arrived at Tashkent in Uzbekistan. The local time was three hours ahead of Moscow time and therefore it was 1-30 p.m. when we reached there. It was very hot. We almost felt the physical nearness to India.

Comrades Alim Mirza, Jahangir, Hasiyath and a number of other youth leaders came to give us a warm welcome at the airport. I was also interviewed at the airport by the correspondent of the local Komsomol newspaper.

After the tiring journey, we found to our annoyance that the bus which took us from the airport to our hotel broke down two or three times — an experience we

encountered for the first time during our trip. The hotel was not a very comfortable place. Probably there was no other accommodation available. The rooms and the linen were not particularly clean, and four of us were huddled in a small room. What with the heat and the swarms of flies, we felt ill at ease. The toilet was also dirty.

As I was leaving the next morning I had not much time for rest. Immediately after lunch, while the other members of the delegation had a nap, I was taken to see the city. It was like one of our smaller Indian cities with *kutchas* roads, dust and dirt. The houses and dress of the people reminded me of the poorer towns of North India. We also went to see the bazaar where people were selling their private produce.

At night we were taken to an interesting musical dance-drama 'Revshan and Zulmohor'. This Uzbek drama resembles some of the romances of our country. The music had a familiar ring. One of the scenes depicted a marriage ceremony with colourful costumes and considerable pomp. The story dealt with the love of a poor musician for the daughter of a rich family. Since he was a good fellow, he was helped by the gods and fairies in his trials and tribulations, and ultimately won his bride.

### *7th July:*

I was to leave for India at 11 a.m. and we therefore had the last meeting of our delegation in the morning. Every member had worked hard and shown commendable discipline. We had been knit into a good team. We had all enjoyed the tour. The Russian youth delegations visiting other countries were always well-knit and disciplined, but

they had not received many delegations from outside who had conducted themselves so well. At times we suffered hardships, but we never grumbled. This was also appreciated by the Russian hosts. The credit for all this goes to every member of the delegation. I must admit that I was indeed happy to lead a batch of such fine colleagues who gave unstinted support to me. Of course, there were a few minor misunderstandings in the beginning when we did not know each other well enough, but within a few days we adjusted ourselves to one another. Even if the day's work was fatiguing, everybody would attend the delegation's daily meeting to exchange notes even if it was at midnight. I had told Pratima that when it was very late she need not attend the meetings, but she would insist on attending them, howsoever late it was. Our attitude throughout had been not to do or say anything which reflected only the individual point of view. Our primary concern was to behave in a manner befitting the organisation which had chosen us to represent it as well as the youth of our country.

Of course, there were occasional difficulties on small matters, but on the whole I think everybody came out very creditably, even though it was the first trip abroad for almost all of us. Therefore, while taking leave of the other members of the delegation, I was overcome with feelings and was sorry to leave them and our Russian friends..

Among all the Russians we met, Misha, our Hindi interpreter came closest to us. He was a remarkable character. He was a die-hard Communist. We were known to have a different ideology. Still he dealt with us and looked after us in a friendly way. I must say that he did this job very well. In spite of the ideological differences we became intimate friends. He was very intelligent and had a good grasp of

things. There was no question, however, of our trying to change one another's views. It was good to see that he started understanding our view-point. He was competent, polite and diplomatic while dealing with us. On the whole, his being with us was helpful to the delegation and to me personally. After a few days we began to discuss many things informally. He would talk about the difficulties of the organisers frankly, and I too could speak to him freely whatever I felt. It was not possible to have taken up some of these matters formally. Apart from Hindi, he knew Urdu and Persian well. It would not be wrong to say that he knew Hindi better than even some of us. He could understand the finer nuances of Hindi idioms. He also knew some Hindi songs and their tunes, and could sing them in the right manner. He was indeed very hard-working. When we left Russia he was moved and gave me a personal present as a token of his affection.

Before taking leave of the delegation I appointed Satpaul Mittal, a member of the National Council of the Youth Congress, as the leader of the delegation in my absence and everyone promised to work under his leadership in the same spirit as they had done under me.

While we were in Russia and visiting different institutions, specially the institutions for Oriental Studies, we usually talked about Vinoba and the Bhoodan Movement. We had prepared special pamphlets on the Bhoodan Movement and distributed them freely. At one stage the members of the delegation thought that it was not proper to talk about Bhoodan and Gandhiji's philosophy more than about our own organisation. But then I explained to them that so far as the youth organisations and their activities are concerned, Russia was far ahead of us, and that there was

nothing new our youth organisations could as yet offer to them. After all we represented our country in Russia and we should talk more about what our country could offer to them; and that was why I was placing more emphasis on the Gandhian ideals and principles. They appreciated this point.

All the Indian friends as well as the local friends had come to the Tashkent airport to see me off. It was with a heavy heart that I took leave of them. If I could have helped it I would have liked to stay on for another three or four days with the other delegates to see more of Uzbekistan.

Termiz was the last halt in the Soviet Union. It is almost on the border and has a small aerodrome in a poor condition. We had to stop there for a longer time than scheduled. It was lunch-time, but there was no arrangement for lunch. The Customs people opened our bags and examined them thoroughly. To our surprise we were given dollar notes in exchange of whatever roubles were left with us.

As soon as the plane landed in Kabul, some members of the aerodrome staff rushed towards me, and recognising me to be an Indian, asked me: "Are you going to India? Come along, another plane is ready to leave for India, rush and get into it." I told them that I had made a reservation to go the next day and I would be staying on. You can imagine my trepidation when the next day I learnt at the airport, after a long wait, that I could not leave that day because of bad weather over the Hindukush Pass. So one day more in Kabul. Fortunately, I came in touch with a couple of Indian friends who looked after me well.

We took off finally on the 9th and my joy knew no bounds when our plane landed in Amritsar. So I was back in-India! It was such a relief to return to the mother country, even though the stay abroad was for a short duration.

The burden of leading our delegation was off my shoulders, but now my mind was turning to another responsibility. That was to make arrangements for the international conference of the World Assembly of Youth which was scheduled to be held from the first week of August in New Delhi. When I got down at the Delhi airport my mind was full of it.

A few days later, some of the other members of the delegation also returned to Delhi. Mittal, Manubhai and Azad had gone to Europe from Russia, and George, Palit and Pratima returned to India directly. They gave me their report of the activities in the Soviet Union after my departure.

Soon after our friends had seen me off at the aerodrome they were asked to shift from Hotel Zerafshan to the Government Guest House eight miles away from the city. This was because the hosts themselves had felt that the hotel we had been staying in was not suitable.

At noon they were taken to the Karl Marx collective farm in Unizabad in Kalinin district, a few miles away from Tashkent. This *kolkhoz* was specially meant for growing vegetables and had produced 17,000 tons of them in 1957. The total area under the farm was 1,644 hectares (3,688



acres). A thousand people worked on the fields, 600 men and 400 women, divided into 560 families. Ninety-five per cent of these families had built houses for themselves. The profit for 1957 was 10 million roubles. Each farmer got about 21 roubles per working day in addition to nine kilogrammes of potatoes and 3 kilogrammes of rice. Out of the profits they distributed about 60 per cent to the farmers, 10 per cent went to the Government in taxes and 15 to 20 per cent were spent on new implements.

On the 8th July, in the morning, the delegation met Com. Khadyrov, Education Minister for Uzbekistan, in the office of the Ministry. He informed our friends that before the revolution there were only 160 schools and 1,300 pupils in Uzbekistan, leaving 98 per cent of the people illiterate. In 1920 Lenin announced a special decree abolishing illiteracy. In 1930 a decree was announced making seven-year education for children compulsory. At present there were 5,800 schools in Uzbekistan with 1.3 million students. Forty-two per cent of the budget, which works out to nearly 1500 million roubles, was allotted for education alone. They have two Universities, 12 institutions for teachers' training and 34 institutions for technological studies. They have 80,000 teachers, 107 refresher schools and 100 institutes for orphans.

The medium of instruction is the Uzbek language and the script is Russian with a slight modification. In middle schools they had two hours per day reserved for "labour lessons". There were two schools in Tashkent and Samarkand which teach Hindi.

When George asked the Minister to clarify his statement that the Komsomol and the Education Ministry worked 'side by side', he gave some further information. He said that

every school had a chief Pioneer instructor who was paid by the Education Ministry, but he worked under the sole guidance of the Komsomol. The Komsomol, in brief, takes 'deep interest' in the working of the schools.

After the meeting was over, the delegates were taken at noon-time to a textile mill named after Stalin. This mill was started in 1953 and it now produced seven lakh metres of cloth per day. It employs 17,000 workers. The wages were given on a progressive 'price system', i.e. a slab system based on production turned out. A worker's minimum wage was 600 roubles and the maximum wage 1,800 roubles, whereas engineers got between 850 and 3,000 roubles.

On the 9th morning the delegates went to the Yangiol collective farm producing cotton and named after Lenin. This *kolkhoz* was started in 1928 by combining six farms. It had an area of 5,000 hectares out of which 3,000 was for raising cotton. In 1956 they produced 7,300 tons of cotton, and had a net income of 27 million roubles. Four thousand people worked on this farm. For each working day every farmer got 22 roubles and 3 kilogrammes of rice.

In the night a mammoth reception was given to the delegates by the Uzbek youth organisations. Com. Alim Akram, Chairman of the Uzbek Committee, welcomed the delegation. The Secretary of the City Youth organisation, a student representative, factory workers and a girl on behalf of the textile mill workers and the Secretary of the City Komsomol spoke welcoming the Indian friends. Mittal made a suitable reply. Manubhai's Gujarati poem on Uzbekistan was greatly appreciated. Azad recited a couplet composed by himself. The function ended by our delegates singing a Hindi song and the Russian song 'Kachyusha', both in chorus.

In the morning of the 10th our delegates were taken to the Academy of Sciences. This Academy had been started in 1943 and it now consisted of 22 research institutions employing 3,500 professors, lecturers and members of the staff. The Uzbek language is the medium of instruction.

Later on, they also went to see the Navai Library named after the great writer who was the first to write books in the Uzbek language. By Government regulations copies of all books published in the Soviet Union are received in this Library. It has two million volumes.

At noon the delegates visited the Tashkent historical museum where they saw relics from the culture of Samarkand and Bokhara.

In the evening they had an interview with Com. Roshidiyev, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Uzbekistan and Vice-President of the U.S.S.R. The interview lasted for nearly half an hour. It was the last engagement for our delegation in the Soviet Union.

The delegates very much wanted to visit the historical cities of Samarkand and Bokhara, seats of ancient Islamic culture. But because of certain practical difficulties it was not found possible.

Soon after my arrival in India, I took the opportunity of calling on our Prime Minister. I met him on the 21st July and gave him an outline of our tour and our impressions of Russia. I conveyed to him the gist of our talk with Mr. Khrushchev as well as Mr. Khrushchev's message for him. I also told him about Mr. Khrushchev's views on

**Kashmir and his message to Bakhshi Ghulam Mohammed. I also submitted to Panditji a copy of the report of our delegation which had been presented to the Congress President earlier.**

**When I met Panditji, Shri Ravindra Varma was also with me. He too had led a similar delegation of the Youth Congress to China at the same time.**

# 10

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## *POSTSCRIPT*

### **RUSSIA AND AMERICA**

SOON AFTER visiting the Soviet Union and writing down my impressions of that country, I had an opportunity to tour the United States. I consider it a special privilege for it enabled me to study and compare at first hand the way people lived and thought in the two most powerful countries in the world today.

The circumstances of my visits to the United States and Russia were more or less similar. When representatives of the Young Adult Council of the National Social Welfare Assembly of the U.S.A. had come to India in August 1958 to attend the session of the General Assembly of the International World Assembly of Youth (WAY) in Delhi, they extended an invitation to the India Committee of WAY to send a representative youth delegation to tour the U.S.A. for two months. Our delegation consisted of seven persons and it was my good fortune that I was asked to be its leader.

It is both easy and difficult to compare and contrast life in the U.S.A. and Russia. It is easy because the superficial differences are so obvious, and difficult because we

have to probe deep to understand why these two countries which are in the forefront of scientific and technological advance are so ignorant about each other and distrust each other. This is particularly strange in an age when fast communications have made the world a small place after all.

In the foregoing pages I attempted to outline how we found the life of the ordinary Russian an almost closed chapter. It is so not because the people are reserved or uninterested in the outside world but because true information about the rest of the world is withheld from them. They are told little about life in other countries, and what little they are told is distorted and made to serve ideological ends. This accounts for the Russian people's astounding misinformation about the American people or even other people. For example, they are told to believe that the American people are war-mongers and that they are destroyers of freedom and supporters of imperialism. Even the words 'peace', 'freedom' and 'democracy' carry different connotations in Russian vocabulary. The official line goes uncontradicted. There is no open discussion and no public attempt to sift the truth from non-truth. A few might manage to listen to foreign broadcasts or might be naturally sceptical of governmental proclamations, but the general mass of people do seem to believe that America is against peace.

Life in America is very different. All the same, curiously enough, their people have also allowed prejudice to becloud their attitude towards Russia. They look at Russians almost in the same way as the Russians look at them. It is needless to say that in contrast to Russia there is complete freedom of the Press in the United States. Newspapers, radio, television and books enable the American people to know the rest of the world. Nevertheless, they are continuously fed on news which has an anti-communist fixation.

Day in and day out they read or hear of communist brutalities, communist purges, communist expansionism and communist conspiracy to conquer the rest of the world. The result is that the Americans are convinced that the prevalence of Communism in any part of the world is a threat to the very existence of the United States and the democratic world. This fear has become so deep-rooted and widespread that they try to judge every international event, or move, in terms of whether it will strengthen the communist world or weaken it. This attitude seems to have grown out of sheer fear and a yearning for self-defence. In the days of Senator McCarthy, the American attitude towards Russia developed into a sort of mass hysteria. The McCarthy wind has now blown over, but the feeling has sunk deep in the American mind that Russia is a challenge to America and the free world. But it must be said that the Americans are sophisticated enough to differentiate between the Russian Government and the Russian people. They are more against the communist system than against the Russians as such.

I could not help wondering how such divergent systems led almost to the same results. The opposites sometimes do meet! There is something common between the general attitudes of the Americans and the Russians. In their attitude towards the rest of the world, however, the Russian people hold the views, they do, because of their Government policy, whereas in America, where the voter is the final arbiter, antagonism to Communism springs from conviction born of a strong sense of individual freedom in which the people firmly believe.

As far as our delegations were concerned, the reception in Russia as well as America was equally warm. Both the people went out of their way to befriend us. Their motives, evidently, must have been different. The Russians, I think,

were friendly mainly because they have not seen or met many non-Russian people, and secondly because it is part of their national policy to be friendly to Asian people. The Americans, on the other hand, are not concerned to the same degree with what their Government's foreign policy is, when it comes to the matter of playing host. They are an extrovert nation and they like to help visitors and entertain them. All they want in return is to be liked as a nation and as individuals. Many of them also know that we in India believe in democracy and that we are striving for its preservation in Asia. But I do not think this is the main reason for their amiability. If a group of non-official Russian people went to America, I am sure the Americans would be equally friendly towards them.

Another common factor between the two people was their attitude to work. They are both earnest and hardworking. The women are no exception. The comparatively lower standard of living in the Soviet Union and the labour shortage that the country is experiencing may be reasons for their women to take on jobs requiring hard manual labour in factories and fields. But even in more affluent America, the women work unsparingly. It may be that they do not do the same type of manual labour as the women of the Soviet Union, but even the very rich women in America mostly do their own household work, including cooking and cleaning. One reason is that domestic servants have to be so highly paid that few can afford them. It is easier to own two cars than hire domestic help or a chauffeur! Secondly, there is a sentiment in favour of everyone doing one's own work. American women had to live a less sheltered life when the country was being opened up and they have traditionally remained more assertive than their European counterparts. These habits persist. A surprisingly high number of housewives go to work. An American home is full of gadgets, but to keep them



working requires no mean skill. Any spare time that the woman gets is spent in public activities. The more well-to-do women who do not go to work spend their spare time in social service. They do not seem to know what it is to go slow. Even their holidays turn out to be hectic rather than restful.

It is one of the paradoxes of our times that the two countries which are militarily the strongest in the world and which go on adding to their striking power every minute, are also continuously talking about peace. This probably means that even though the world has not learnt the secret of banishing wars, it has at least learnt to recognise that any nuclear war means the total destruction of mankind. That is why both Russia and America vie with each other in waging peace. Each country wants to convince the rest of the world that it is the one that believes in peace and not the other. But, apart from governmental claims, it is undeniable that the people in both the countries clamour for peace. The Russian people have very recently gone through the terrible experience of a war fought on their soil and they cannot think of undergoing the horrors of a war again. They have waited long enough to enjoy the fruits of peace and economic development. The sacrifice of the American people also in the war was by no means small. Although there was no fighting on their home soil, their sons fell in various combat theatres all over the world.

Despite this desire for peace, however, it is obvious that each country wants peace on its own terms and distrusts the other. The American attitude to the cold war appears to be defensive. They are content to preserve the *status quo*. On the other hand, the Communist ideology is expansive. Slowly but surely it is trying to spread its areas of influence. For-

fortunately, India does not belong to either of these camps and it should be the hope of every Indian that this area of non-alignment and positive neutrality should grow in size and wield influence on the minds of the Russians and the Americans.

I shall not seek to describe here all that we saw in the United States. We visited so many institutions and talked to so many people during our two-month tour that even a brief account of our impressions would take up much space. I shall only give some excerpts from an article I wrote in August 1959, soon after my return from America.

“We travelled from east coast to west coast and north to south, covering 8,000 miles and twelve of the States. Our hosts, the Young Adult Council (YAC) had arranged a well-planned programme of rounds and visits for us, after taking into consideration the varied interests and needs of the different members of the delegation.

“Ours was the first delegation of its kind invited by any youth organisation of the U.S.A. to their country. Later, the YAC had also invited eight representatives of different West African countries on a similar delegation. We were happy to meet them in New York just before the completion of our tour.

“One imagines that the people of the U.S.A., being rich, are likely to be rather easy-going. But that is not so. Even the very rich people, both men and women, put in a good deal of hard work either taking up some job or doing some social service. One is immediately impressed with their sense of dignity of labour. Even very well-to-do persons who can afford to hire servants do not generally do so and prefer to do their own work.

**"We found the people to be very generous, good-hearted, helpful and hospitable. They go out of their way to help one in every way. They have several well-run institutions, where people offer their voluntary services. They also collect huge funds from voluntary donations for social service.**

**"As far as the youth organisations of the United States are concerned, we found that they are not politically inclined to any great extent. Some of them, like the YMCA and YWCA are doing good work, mainly in the social welfare field. The Young Democrats, Young Republicans, Young Christian Workers and National Students' Association are somewhat more politically conscious. Still they are not as strong or well-organised as one would expect them to be. In general, we can say that there are a number of active youth organisations, but there is no national youth movement as such. Very recently they have begun to feel the need for such a movement and are making efforts in that direction. This may be the reason why the Young Democrats, and later the Young Republicans also, have decided to join the YAC, which is a co-ordinating committee of the main youth organisations in the country. The YAC is also making greater efforts to co-ordinate the activities of the youth organisations and build them into a conscious and constructive youth movement. Their invitations to us and the African youth leaders were part of this new effort.**

**"There is a good deal of misunderstanding prevailing about the foreign policy of the United States in the outside world. It would, therefore, be worth-while for us to try to understand and appreciate their point of view, particularly as the general impression in our country is that the U.S.A. is not too friendly towards us. We found that as far as inter-**

national politics are concerned there was very little interest among the generality of their people. Except the *New York Times* and one or two other journals, all newspapers, even in New York and Washington, and specially so at the State level, give very little coverage to international news. The newspapers are rather bulky, but 75 per cent of their space is taken up by advertisements. The people are more interested in increasing their own incomes and material welfare. They want to be left alone to themselves, and do not want to interfere with others. They have no political ambitions or imperialistic designs over other countries. It appeared to us that their attitude was something like this: If somehow they got an assurance that other countries, and particularly the U.S.S.R., would not interfere in their affairs, they would be prepared to isolate themselves completely from the rest of the world and carry on by themselves. Their economic prosperity and self-sufficiency is in a large measure responsible for this attitude.

“They take immense pride in, and cherish, the ‘American way of life’, and hence resent and fear any threat to it from any quarter as likely to undermine the very basis of their existence. Because of this, there is a tendency among the people to evaluate everything in terms of pro-Communism and anti-Communism, and opposing or supporting it on that basis.

“This is reflected in the foreign policy of their State Department which appears to be negative and defensive. Because of the traditional lack of interest in international affairs, and isolation from the rest of the world in the years preceding World War II, the U.S.A. has not cared to build up a specialised cadre of foreign service personnel for diplomatic assignments abroad, as Britain and the U.S.S.R. have

done, for example. It looks as though international leadership has been thrust upon the Americans, for which they are neither inclined nor suitably equipped. I discussed these points with many important persons whom I met there and most of them were in broad agreement with these conclusions. As a consequence, their policies have been largely misunderstood in other countries and especially in India, and their own people at home have not been fully kept informed of the trends of thought in the outside world. It is because of this that the American people are not able to understand why their policies are misunderstood by the outside world.

“It is my feeling that there is not much of information — and to some extent there is positive misinformation — about India among the American people in general. But interest in India is continuously growing, and when we were there the atmosphere was indeed favourable to our country. Many of their wrong notions about us seem to be disappearing. A pointer to this is the fact that we were not asked any questions about Kashmir which till recently was a burning topic of anti-Indian feelings. The people are slowly realising the need for an uncommitted bloc, and they are now more inclined to understand and appreciate our foreign policy.

“I might add that the climate for American private investment in India seems to be becoming favourable. Many industrialists, bankers, financiers and others whom I met evinced keen interest in such investments. It should be possible for us to channelise our efforts and take advantage of this favourable position.

“We met many important people during the course of

our tour; among them were Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, Senators Kennedy and Humphrey, Mr. Chester Bowles, Secretary Benson, Mr. Alcorn, the then Chairman of the Republican Party, and Governors Nelson Rockefeller of New York State and Williams of Michigan. Our last official appointment was with Mr. Rockefeller. He was friendly, unassuming and frank. When he asked for our impressions of our tour, I told him what we felt about their foreign policy. He seemed to be broadly in agreement with us. He told us that the future of democracy depended upon the working together in close co-operation of the United States, India and Brazil. We could not exactly understand his emphasis on Brazil in the present context.

“I think we should make concerted efforts to achieve rapport with the American people and keep them better informed about our country. Non-official delegations such as ours, can very often establish much better relations and can do much more work in an informal way than official delegations. I feel convinced that more and more unofficial goodwill missions promoted by voluntary organisations at different levels will prove very useful in bringing our two countries closer together.”

Here are two great industrialised societies. Both nations are dedicated to the supremacy of science. The successful launching of the Sputnik by Russia has shaken the average American citizen from his belief that his country was far ahead of its rival, although the American policy-makers had been familiar with the great strides of science in the Soviet Union. The two powers are nearly equal in their military strength. There is no longer any question of the complete

superiority of one country over the other in any particular field. The sheer desire for self-preservation should drive each country to know the other better. This explains the recent exchange of visits by the topmost leaders of the two countries. This also holds hope for a gradual acceptance of the principles of *Panchsheel* — the doctrine of co-existence and of live and let live.

## **APPENDIX I**

### **REPORT OF THE DELEGATION**

The Indian Youth Congress held its second annual session at Lucknow in October 1957. At that time we had invited fraternal delegates from the youth organisations of many foreign countries. The following countries were represented in the session: U.S.S.R., U.S.A., Japan, East Germany, China, North Viet Nam, Egypt and Yugoslavia.

Before returning to their respective countries, the representatives of the U.S.S.R. and China had extended to the Youth Congress an invitation to send a goodwill delegation to their countries some time in 1958. This was confirmed in writing soon after their return.

The A.I.C.C. Youth Department accepted the invitation and decided to send goodwill delegations to both these countries. One delegation went to China under the leadership of Shri Ravindra Varma, another to Russia. I was asked to lead the delegation to Russia.

The delegation to Russia, besides myself, consisted of the following six persons:

1. Shri S. P. Mittal, Secretary, Punjab Pradesh Youth Congress.
2. Shri Puran Singh Azad, AICC Youth Department, New Delhi.



3. Shri A. C. George, Secretary, Kerala Pradesh Youth Congress.
4. Shri Manubhai Patel, Gujerat Pradesh Congress Committee.
5. Shri Prabhat Palit, West Bengal Pradesh Youth Congress.
6. Mrs. Pratima Mukherji, West Bengal.

We reached Moscow on the 12th of June, 1958, and the duration of our stay in Russia was one month.

During our stay in Russia, besides Moscow we were taken to Leningrad, Yalta (Crimea), Kiev (Ukraine), back to Moscow, and Tashkent (Uzbekistan).

At these places we visited various children's and youth organisations, and studied their working carefully. We saw their educational institutions including the Universities at Moscow and Leningrad, the Oriental faculties teaching foreign languages, specially Asian and African languages, including provincial languages as well. We also saw the welfare activities carried on among the children specially through the organisations of "Young Pioneers" spread all over the country. We saw their cultural activities through theatres, dramas, operas, ballets, etc. We were also interested to see their parks and palaces of culture, sports stadia and activities and how young men spend their leisure for recreation, rest and nation-building activities.

The Komsomol (Young Communist League) is the biggest Youth Organisation in the U.S.S.R. We met their representatives at various places, and had long discussions with them. This organisation is working under the direct control and guidance of the Communist Party. The Komsomol

wields great power in the life of the Soviet youth. Their main sports activities and national reconstruction work by youth are carried on through this organisation. It has the complete backing and support of the Government.

We had detailed discussions with the leaders of the Soviet Youth Committee and Komsomol regarding our future relationship and common activities.

We were glad to attend the First Youth Day of the Soviet Union on the 29th of June, 1958, at Kiev. The Komsomol had proposed that the last holiday of June should be celebrated throughout the country as Youth Day, and the Government had accepted the proposal. The function was organised in an impressive manner. The whole town was in a festive mood. The parades, march-past, sports by young men and children, etc. were impressive. The crowd was very friendly towards us and they greatly appreciated a token gift we gave them on behalf of our organisation. They also appreciated our songs and music.

Of course, it is very difficult to express any opinion after such a short period of travel in a country which is so vast. It must also be remembered that we went round the country through the representatives of, and generally in the company of, the Soviet Youth Committees everywhere. Therefore, though we were free to move about wherever we liked, our views could be one-sided.

Our conclusions are as follows:-

(1) The Soviet people have gone through a terrible war and suffered tremendous losses. Therefore, naturally, the people, and especially the young men, are against war. We are convinced that they want peace, and they want to co-operate with those who want to work in the interest of peace.

(2) Everywhere we went we found a tremendous amount of goodwill for the Indian people in general. This friendliness for the Indian people is specially because of our successful fight for freedom from a colonial power and our genuine desire for and contribution to world peace. Respect and love for our Prime Minister is boundless. As a matter of fact, the common people of Russia adore him.

(3) Everywhere in the Soviet Union we found that the youth were making a substantial contribution to the reconstruction and progress of the country, especially in fulfilling the Plans. We feel that in this regard our youth have to do much more than what they are doing today. Our youth too must be organised to co-operate fully in all departments of national reconstruction, functioning within the framework of the democratic structure that we have adopted in our country.

(4) Our friendliness with the Russian people should not mean that our activities strengthen the Communist Party of India in any way, directly or indirectly. We should take special care for this. Our young people should always bear in mind that though the Russian people also want peace, our ideology, ways and means are absolutely different from that of the Communist Party which is ruling the U.S.S.R. It will be ruinous for our country if we mix up the friendliness with ideologies.

(5) We recognise the right of the Soviet people to rule in any way they like in their own country, but we feel that the Russian type of system is not suitable for our country and for our aspirations.

(6) We found that the youth of the Soviet Union were working very hard. They have sacrificed a great deal for

the sake of their country. We think that our youth should also work hard in a well disciplined manner and with greater responsibility. We should talk and discuss less and should work more.

(7) This should be possible if we entrust more and more responsible work to be handled by the youth organisations through the youth leaders. We are confident that if they are entrusted with greater responsibility, which is the need of the time, they can handle it properly and get themselves equipped for the future tasks which lie ahead of them.

(8) For implementing the above suggestions we suggest that at the initiative of the Ministries of Education and Planning a delegation may be sent to Russia, West Germany, Belgium, Holland and England specially to study the youth movements there and see how best we can benefit by their experience.

(9) If the Youth Congress has to grow and has to keep contacts with foreign youth organisations which we think is necessary, it should have a special foreign section with suitable staff.

(10) We feel that while sending out such delegations in future at least one of the members of the delegation should know the language of the country visited.

(11) Lastly, we are convinced more than ever before that our way is the best. Democracy and individual liberty should never be sacrificed for anything, much less for the sake of achieving our ideals with greater speed.

It was very useful to have a lady who could sing well in the delegation. We feel that all such delegations should include at least one or two ladies, who can sing and also dance well.

All of us have collected very valuable information on various aspects of Soviet life which we intend to place before our youth workers in the form of articles written in our magazine *The Youth Congress*.

We think it was a wise decision to have sent the Youth Congress Delegation to U.S.S.R. at this juncture. It was very useful and timely. We feel that the delegation on the whole was successful in creating goodwill — the purpose for which it was sent.

We are grateful to the Youth Congress for selecting us for this important and interesting work. During our stay in Russia we worked hard to see that our mission was a success, and I am glad to say that all the members of the delegation gave me their wholehearted support and we all acted as a team in a very disciplined and well behaved manner. For this I am thankful to every one of the members of the delegation.

We are very grateful to Mr. Khrushchev for receiving the delegation and granting us a very frank and interesting interview which lasted for about 35 minutes. The meeting was very friendly and Mr. Khrushchev himself invited questions from us and answered them all in a sympathetic manner. We are told that perhaps this was the first non-official delegation received by the Prime Minister of the Soviet Union. In any case it was the first such youth delegation to be received by him.

Lastly, we would like to thank the Soviet Youth Committee for their very kind invitation, and for looking after our comforts in such a wonderful manner. We are also very grateful to the Soviet youth in general.

This is the unanimous report of our delegation.

*Ramkrishna Bajaj*

19th July 1958.

LEADER OF THE DELEGATION

## **APPENDIX II**

### **FAREWELL TALK OVER MOSCOW TELEVISION\***

**SISTERS, BROTHERS AND YOUNG FRIENDS OF RUSSIA,**

We have come here as representatives of the Youth Congress of the Indian National Congress, whose leader is Pandit Jawaharlal Nehrū. We come from all corners of India. An annual convention of the Youth Congress was held in Lucknow during October 1957. On our invitation three representatives of the Soviet Youth Committee attended the convention as observers; and we were happy at their participation in the convention. At that time your representatives invited the Youth Congress to send a delegation to the Soviet Union. As the result of that invitation we are in your midst today. We are thankful to your Committee for the invitation extended to us.

About 24 days have passed since we came to Russia. We went from Moscow to Leningrad, Yalta and Kiev and from there we have come back to the great city of Moscow. From here we are going to Uzbekistan, and after completing one month's tour of your country, we shall go back to our country.●

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\* This is an English rendering of the talk which was given in Hindi.

We have come here with an open mind and open heart. We have tried to study and understand the progress of your youth, your institutions, your sports, the patterns of life of your people, without any prejudice. We have seen and learnt many new things here; and we shall carry our impressions back to our country; we shall use those impressions for our benefit.

The Father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, has taught us the lessons of truth, non-violence and peace. We fought the British with peaceful and non-violent means and achieved the independence of our country. Our beloved leader, Jawaharlal Nehru, follows the same path and tries to save peace for the world. He is teaching the lesson of peace to the citizens of our land. We felt happy when your leaders and the people of your land accepted the principles of *Panchsheel* and decided to work for the establishment of peace in the world on the basis of those principles.

Wherever we went in your country we found your love in abundance. We are greatly moved by the love your people bear for India. After we go back to our country, we shall convey to our people, especially to our youth comrades, the love you bear for them.

You have done very big things. Your country is big and great. The Moscow University and the Metro are big steps in the direction of man's progress. We especially liked the institutions of the Young Pioneers. The children were happy and smiling. They met us everywhere with great love and affection, and they became our friends very easily. We are very happy to see all the arrangements you have made for the children so that they should have comforts during

their leisure time, that they should have all facilities for play and sports, for learning and studying. You are so careful about the welfare of your children.

There is no doubt that, like the people and youth of India, the people and youth here genuinely desire peace. Although the principles and methods of India and Russia are different, the ultimate aim of both the countries is the same, that is, to establish peace in the world. We want to strengthen the forces of peace by joining hands with the peoples and the youth of such countries as are anxious for peace. Therefore, we are confident that we together can work for peace, hand in hand.

You made the Sputnik. This is a revolutionary event in the history of the world. Science and technology have progressed greatly in your land. We are aware of the industry, skill and effort that have gone into the making of the Sputnik. We are also aware of the sacrifices your young men and women have undergone for it. For years they have experienced the shortage of daily necessities. Yet, they have braved it with enthusiasm. We are certain that this sacrifice and this immense force will be used solely in the interests of peace in the world. Then alone will your sacrifice be regarded as a sacrifice for the entire peoples of the world. We wish you success in this endeavour of yours.

The day before yesterday our Delegation met your popular leader, Mr. Khrushchev. We are very happy at this meeting and we thank him from the bottom of our hearts. For a considerable time, and with great friendliness Mr. Khrushchev answered all our questions and showed us great cordiality. We consider this to be our good fortune.



We are sure that the future of the youth of Russia and India is very great. Both of our organisations together can work to make the future of the world bright. Finally, we convey the best wishes of all the members of the Youth Congress to the young men and women of Russia. We are very grateful to the young friends of the Soviet Youth Committee for their invitation, for their welcome and affection. Kindly accept our love and felicitations for all of you.

*Namaste.*

## APPENDIX III

# INCOMES AND PRICES IN THE SOVIET UNION \*

## (1) MONTHLY INCOMES

\* These lists have been compiled by the Author from his personal observations. (1.2 roubles = Re. 1 00). The figures are for 1958

| 1  | 2             | 3             |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| Director — Institute of International Affairs            | 7,000         | 5,850         |
| Translators (about: 600 to 800 roubles per author sheet) | 6,000-8,000   | 5,000-6,650   |
| Engineer   | 1,000-1,500   | 800-1,200     |
| Academician  | 20,000-30,000 | 18,000-25,000 |
| Maid servant   | 200-300       | 175-250       |
| Sales-girl   | 600           | 500           |
| Clerk  | 500-700       | 420-600       |
| Labourer   | 800           | 660           |
| Doctor (has to attend about 40 families per day)         | 600           | 500           |
| Taxi Driver  | 1,200         | 1,000         |

House rent is roughly 3 per cent of the income. Gas bill per family: 3 to 4 roubles per month. Electric bill including radio & television: 20 to 30 roubles. Income tax: 10% on incomes up to 2000 roubles per month, and the maximum rate 13 per cent.

## (2) PRICES OF VARIOUS COMMODITIES

| Name of Article                                       | Unit of Measure | Price   |                                      |                |                |
|---|-----------------|---------|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
|   |                 | Roubles | Equivalent in Rupees (approximately) | In Free Market | Rs.            |
| 1   | 2               | 3       | 4                                    | 5              |                |
| Rice  | kilogram        | 20      | 16                                   |                |                |
| Groundnuts  | "               | 15      | 12.50                                |                |                |
| Potatoes (not available at the time in Govt. markets) | "               | —       | —                                    |                | 1.25 to 1.75   |
| Tomatoes (not available at the time in Govt. markets) | "               | —       | —                                    |                | 25.00 to 33.00 |
| Cauliflower   | one             | 5       | 4                                    |                | 12.00 to 17.00 |
| Cabbage   | "               | 20      | 16                                   |                | —              |
| Onions  | kilogram        | 4       | 3                                    |                | 17             |
| Cucumber (in August)                                  | "               | 2 to 3  | 1.50 to 2.50                         |                | —              |

| 1                        | 2               | 3     | 4     | 5              |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-------|-------|----------------|
|                          | kilogram        |       |       |                |
| Cucumber (out of season) |                 | —     | —     | 25.00 to 30.00 |
| Oranges                  | "               | 16    | 13.25 | —              |
| Small Mosambis           | "               | 15    | 12.50 | —              |
| Lime                     | one             | 2.50  | 2.10  | —              |
| Pure milk                | seer            | 12    | 10    | —              |
| Pure Milk *              | glass           | 0.65  | 0.50  | —              |
| Skimmed milk             | seer            | 2.40  | 2     | —              |
| Skimmed milk (in winter) | "               | 6     | 5     | —              |
| Curds                    | glass           | 1.80  | 1.50  | —              |
| Butter                   | kilogram        | 28.50 | 23.75 | —              |
| Ice cream (small)        | one             | 2.00  | 1.50  | —              |
| Tea                      | cup             | 0.50  | 0.40  | —              |
| Tea with lime            | "               | 1.00  | 0.80  | —              |
| Chocolate                | one small piece | 1.00  | 0.80  | —              |

\* Good cows are milked thrice a day by electric machine or by hand. Normal weight of the cow: 740 kilograms. Average milk per cow per day: 25 to 30 kilograms. Highest; 52 kilograms. Milk is sold at lower rates for children.

# APPENDIX III

127

| 1                  | 2      | 3               | 4               | 5 |
|--------------------|--------|-----------------|-----------------|---|
| Long bread         | one    | 2.50            | 2.10            |   |
| Black bread        | "      | 1.00            | 0.80            |   |
| Eggs               | "      | 1.30            | 1.00            |   |
| Sherry             | glass  | 0.50            | 0.40            |   |
| Vodka              | bottle | 28.00           | 23.00           |   |
| Beer               | "      | 2.45            | 2.00            |   |
| Overcoat           | one    | 2700            | 2250            |   |
| Woollen suit       | "      | 2000 to<br>2500 | 1650 to<br>2080 |   |
| Mixed woollen suit | "      | 800             | 650             |   |
| Pure woollen cloth | yard   | 300 to<br>400   | 250 to<br>330   |   |
| Silk shirt         | one    | 150             | 125             |   |
| Cotton shirt       | "      | 60              | 50              |   |

| 1                                       | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5 |
|---|------|------|------|---|
| Ukraine cotton shirt                    | one  | 300  | 250  |   |
| Cotton socks (ordinary)                 | pair | 13   | 11   |   |
| Cotton socks (inferior)                 | "    | 7 to | 6 to |   |
|   |      | 8    | 7    |   |
| Towels (ordinary quality)               | one  | 50   | 42   |   |
| Shoes — leather (worth Rs. 30 in India) | pair | 250  | 210  |   |
| Children's shoes — leather              | "    | 77   | 64   |   |
| Tennis shoes                            | "    | 32   | 26   |   |
| Silk shoe-lace                          | "    | 3    | 2.50 |   |
| Ordinary shoe-lace                      | "    | 1    | 0.85 |   |
| Boot polishing                          | once | 2    | 1.75 |   |
| Ordinary Ladies' handbag (leather)      | one  | 100  | 85   |   |

Generally cotton cloth and leather goods are about four to five times costlier than in India

# APPENDIX III

20

| 1                      | 2            | 3            | 4            | 5 |
|------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---|
| Vanity bag (ordinary)  | one          | 100          | 85           |   |
| Umbrella (Chinese)     | "            | 80           | 67           |   |
| Scent                  | small bottle | 13           | 11           |   |
| Lipstick               | one          | 5 to<br>12   | 4 to<br>10   |   |
| Almond cream           | bottle       | 6            | 5            |   |
| Cold cream for face    | box          | 3 to<br>5    | 2.50 to<br>4 |   |
| Electric shaver        | one          | 90 to<br>180 | 75 to<br>125 |   |
| Shaving brush          | "            | 15           | 12.50        |   |
| Bath soap (inferior)   | 3 cakes      | 9            | 7.50         |   |
| Soap case              | one          | 3.25         | 2.50         |   |
| Tooth brush (inferior) | "            | 3            | 2.50         |   |
| Big comb               | "            | 6.50         | 4.50         |   |
| Small hair comb        | "            | 3.50         | 3            |   |



| 1                    | 2          | 3        | 4        | 5 |
|----------------------|------------|----------|----------|---|
| Cigarettes           | one packet | 1.50     | 1.25     |   |
| Match box            | "          | 0.15     | 0.12     |   |
| Ball-pen type pencil | one        | 5 to 20  | 4 to 16  |   |
| Ordinary pencil      | "          | 0.30     | 0.24     |   |
| Note book (40 pages) | "          | 0.17     | 0.14     |   |
| Stove*               | one        | 50       | 42       |   |
| Fibre box (small)    | "          | 60 to 80 | 50 to 70 |   |
| Television set       | "          | 800      | 675      |   |
| Bicycle              | "          | 690      | 575      |   |
| Scooter              | "          | 3,000    | 2,500    |   |
| 5-seater Car         |            | 15,000   | 12,500   |   |
| 7-seater Car         |            | 30,000   | 25,000   |   |

\* Stoves, fibre boxes and television sets are quite cheap in Russia.

*Hotel Peking* : Single-room with bath: Roubles 30 to 35 = Rs. 25 to 30 per day.

Double-room with bath: Roubles 45 to 50 = Rs 38 to 42 per day.

\* Breakfast, lunch and dinner extra

In hotels an ordinary lunch costs Roubles 16 = Rs. 13









